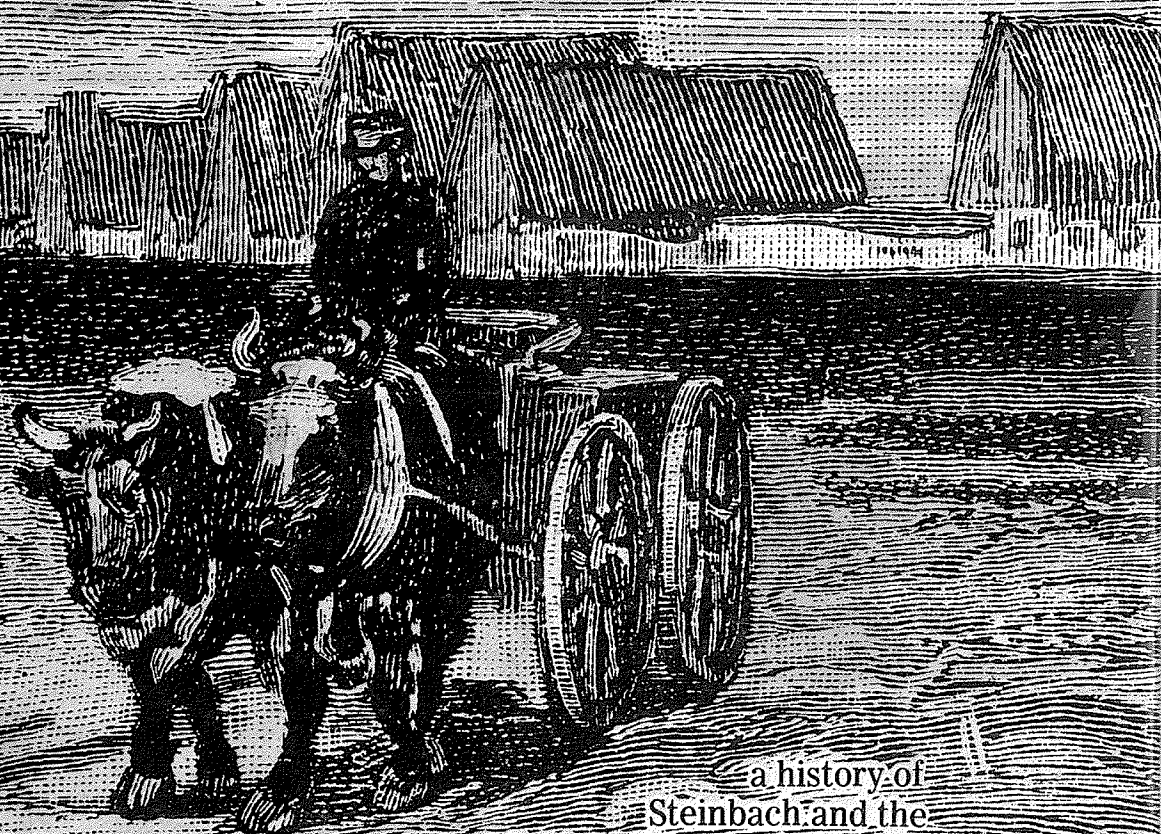


Reflections on our heritage



a history of
Steinbach and the
R.M. of Hanover from 1874

Reviews

One of the major challenges which faces the author and editor of a local history is to produce a work which will appeal to both the scholar and the layman. This is not an easy task, but in his **Reflections on our heritage**, Mr. Warkentin in meeting the challenge head-on has gathered together in one volume several elements which are seldom found in harmonious union.

Because of its wealth of original material, this book will be helpful to students of history; it will also appeal to research specialists, for many of the contributors, in one field of endeavor or another, were themselves the makers of the history of which they have written so well.

The busy layman also will like this book, chiefly because much of the subject matter has been put together in short topical chapters which may be read as units in themselves — much to the delight of that large body — the scanners and the browsers.

Mr. Abe Warkentin, author and editor; Derksen Printers Limited, the publishers; and the people of Steinbach and Hanover — the original settlers and their descendants — all who have contributed to this volume, have given us an archival gem, happily wrapped in a free-flowing style — all in all, a welcome addition to the history of the Mennonites in Manitoba.

Frank Hall,
Editor of Publications,
Manitoba Historical Society

Abe Warkentin has done well to kindle fond memories, recount memorable events and pay respect to some of those who made it happen.

Through the eyes of a trained and capable journalist, we see a panorama of positive development unfold. With skill and the finesse of a storyteller the "editor" selects a series of meaningful pictures and short narrative to convey a buoyant message. Neatly divided into 28 free-flowing chapters, the volume ranges across communities and portrays people as those "who made it happen".

With candor, insight and brevity, the pages reveal the difficulties and achievements that were part of the original 38 reserve villages and the several non-Mennonite communities. With a spirit of optimism this readable community survey comes as a welcome addition to the series of Manitoba centennial editions.

Peter Thiessen,
Educational Consultant,
Red River Community College.

Dust jacket pictures as well as pictures for the religion and agriculture chapter heads are taken from wood engravings appearing in "Picturesque Canada" believed to be published around the turn of the century. These rare and exceptional engravings were made by the first Canadian artists to visit the quaint Mennonite villages in Manitoba only a few years after the 1874-76 settlement years. Color artwork is by Don Sobering; inside artwork by Lloyd Desender.

Reflections on our heritage

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Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada

Reflections on our heritage



A Mennonite village in Manitoba in the 1870's

a history of
Steinbach and the
R.M. of Hanover from 1874

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you."

Deuteronomy 32:7

Foreword

The publishing of local histories is not new in Western Canada. Ever since communities began celebrating the 50th and 75th anniversaries of their founding, they recorded in printed form the beginning, growth and outstanding events in their community in neatly-printed book form.

The early pioneers who settled this country had their hands full eking out a living and laying the foundation for a great country; consequently one cannot fault them for not keeping good records of their day-to-day proceedings. This makes the task of the local historian that much more difficult and the work he does, consequently, that much more valuable.

In compiling the history of Steinbach and the East Reserve, our author, Abe Warkentin, not only had in mind to record the day-to-day activities of these pioneers, but he also keeps before the reader the Mennonite aspect of these settlements, which makes the book doubly valuable to the student of Canadian history. He covers not only the local history aspect but also provides a deep insight into one of the groups that make up the mosaic of this country.

The author has spent countless hours interviewing oldtimers, searching through diaries, letters and over 50 years of newspapers to complete this book. The reader is assured not only of fascinating reading, but of authenticity as well.

Books of this type are generally community undertakings; for some unknown reason, we did not find any group that could be motivated to undertake this task, hence it has been done as a private undertaking.

Now that the book is completed, I want to thank the people who encouraged (and almost egged us on) to undertake this publishing venture.

Derksen Printers
Steinbach, Manitoba

Eugene Derksen
Publisher

Preface and dedication

This book is a dedication to the ideals and principles of the Mennonites who first came to Manitoba from the Ukraine in 1874 and has been compiled in the belief that the Mennonite heritage and religion is unique and relevant for this and future generations.

The book covers a lot of ground. It goes back briefly to the Ukraine to show why the Mennonites left their rich farms there and then follows their immigration to the wilderness of the East Reserve which is the area of land now roughly contained by the Rural Municipality of Hanover and which was set aside by the Dominion government in 1873 to encourage Mennonite settlement.

The great pioneering hardships, the unique communities, personal accounts by some of the early settlers and the consequent growth of the entire area up to modern times—these are all here.

Though the other nationalities living within the Reserve or municipal boundaries are given a fair amount of coverage, this book is essentially a history of the Mennonites of Steinbach and surrounding communities.

A real effort has been made to make this history interesting and still include enough factual matter to make it authoritative. It was quite impossible, and not either the purpose of this book, to list, in chronological order, every single item of historical significance that has occurred in the area within the last 98 years, and every person who has left his mark here. In recognizing the efforts of individuals and community leaders, this book is representative; not every one who deserves recognition can receive it. And if it appears to some readers that the book emphasizes the history of the business community, it is because the growth of the communities paralleled, in many cases, the growth of the business, and further, because historical information of the early and later businesses is far easier to obtain than in other areas.

Research for this history was extensive and carried out, intermittently, right through 1970. Old copies of the **Steinbach Post** were studied as were manuscripts and other historical publications. Providing the most valuable information were articles and records published in the **Carillon News** and the thesis written by Professor John Henry Warkentin in 1960 and entitled **The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba**. Dr. E. K. Francis' **In Search of Utopia** also provided background information in several instances.

Literally hundreds of others helped in providing information and pictures. Deserving special recognition in this respect is John C. Reimer, present curator of the Mennonite Village Museum. Unselfishly, he donated many hours to making essential information available. Well-known **Carillon**

News feature writer Gerald Wright provided background for many of the personality writeups and the story of the H. W. Reimer store. Rev. D. K. Schellenberg compiled the chapter on religion and Peter Dyck the chapter on education.

Originally, plans were for a considerably smaller book but as more and more material was collected and pictures filed, it was decided that to be done properly the book would have to be expanded to its present size.

As a direct result, the book missed several publication deadlines and the publisher, who kept hinting he wanted a local history and not a thesis, had to wait out the last few chapters with infinite patience.

—Abe Warkentin

September 26, 1971
Steinbach, Manitoba

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*Fond memories would die,
Brave deeds would be forgotten,
The joys and sorrows of yesteryear
Would fade into oblivion
Were it not for this book.*

Edited and compiled
by
Abe Warkentin,
editor, *Carillon News*

1. Introduction

The story of Steinbach and the Mennonite East Reserve in Manitoba begins with the Anabaptist movement in Europe in the sixteenth century.

Social and religious reform was sweeping northern Europe during the Reformation period and the Anabaptists protested institutionalized religion and the "incompleted" Protestantism of reformers such as Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli.

They insisted on the revival of the Apostolic church as described in the New Testament and made adult baptism and a refusal to bear arms two of the main tenets of their faith.

In 1536, a Catholic priest in the Netherlands, Menno Simons, was converted to Anabaptism. His teachings and leadership became so influential that those who believed as he did came to be called Mennonites.

Terrific persecution of the Mennonites by state and church followed. Thousands were brutally tortured and killed in the Netherlands by the Duke of Alba and consequently, many fled the Low Countries to seek new homes and freedom from persecution. One large group of Mennonites found a sanctuary in the Vistula-Nogal Delta near Danzig, owned by Polish landlords.

Experienced in drainage works, these Frieslanders drained the swampy area along the Vistula River and prospered. This prosperity invoked the jealousy of the Poles who consequently began to exploit them. Then, the territory around Danzig fell to Prussia in 1772 and the new ruler Frederick II imposed various restrictions on the Mennonites.

At the same time, the Tsarina of Russia, Catherine II, invited foreigners from all over Europe to settle in the newly-conquered territory north of the Black Sea, now called the Ukraine. Promised special concessions, most notably exemption from military service and religious freedom, the first group of 250 families left Prussia and arrived on the banks of the Chortitzer River. The first settlement was called Chortitza and from 1789 to 1796 approximately 350 families settled there.

Conditions in Prussia, meanwhile, worsened for the Mennonites remaining there and consequently another 365 families moved between 1803 and 1806 to start a new settlement in South Russia called Molotschna. Other small groups continued to come until 1840.

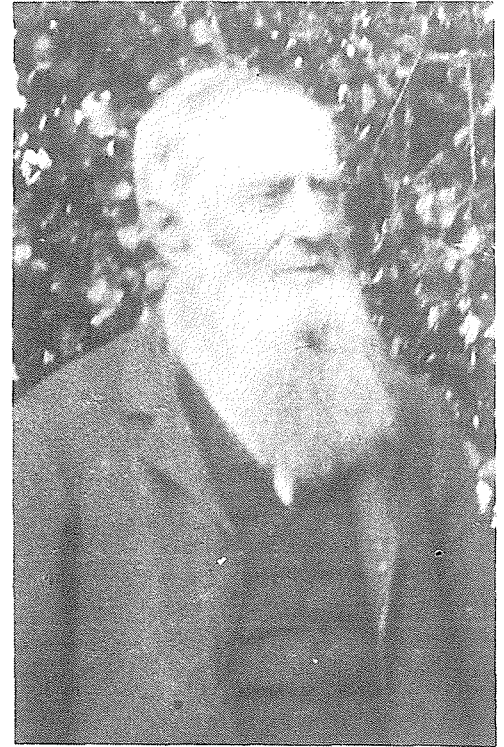
The settlements faced many pioneering hardships. For generations these people had worked land which had too much moisture. Now they were to survive in a region which not only lacked moisture but had no commercial grain market.

With the assistance of the Russian government and Mennonite leaders, the colonies survived. Sheep and other livestock raising was introduced and carried the settlers over till a market for grain developed.

The colonies, and villages within, grew. There was little interference by the Russian government and practically no contact at all with the world outside the colonies. The



Tsarina Catherine II of Russia who ruled from 1762-1796. She reformed the government administration and fostered commercial and industrial growth. As the result of several wars she won the Crimea and other lands for her country and populated these new territories with foreigners. Included were the ancestors of most Mennonites now living in southeastern Manitoba. These people were living in Prussia at the time where they were being exploited by Frederick II. Promised special concessions, notably exemption from military service, the first group of 250 Mennonite families left Prussia to form the Chortitzer settlement around 1789. Other groups followed until 1840.



Cornelius Toews, Russian delegate who together with David Classen, represented the **Kleine Gemeinde** Mennonites in the 1873 inspection of the land in Manitoba. This photo was taken at Mr. Toews' home at Greenland July 30, 1906. Mr. Toews' grandchildren include Mrs. P. S. Guenther, Ben P. Wiebe, Mrs. Ben E. Toews and Mrs. George D. Penner. No other photographs of the delegates have been traced.

Mennonites were farmers and kept to their work. Good agricultural practises were encouraged and sometimes nearly forced by Mennonite leaders.

By the late 1840's the Mennonite colonies in South Russia were regarded as the most prosperous rural agricultural communities in the entire country and the prize exhibits of the agricultural leaders.

But then, slowly, a series of issues arose that at first upset and then alarmed the people.

Most notable of these was the announcement in 1871 that the government intended to discontinue the practise of granting Mennonites military exemption. Agitation to leave the country began almost immediately. It was felt that a sacred trust had been broken. The fact that the new regulations did not become effective till 1880 and that the regulations allowed Mennonites to serve as non-combatants made little difference.

There were at least three other main problem areas. The first was a religious conflict among the Mennonites. Church officials in some cases used considerable influence in

other than spiritual matters. Some groups strongly objected, stating that Mennonite principles were being violated.

The second problem area involved the lack of land. There was an ever-increasing number of people who had no property of their own and the problem was difficult to solve as the land immediately surrounding the colonies was not available.

The third problem was that the Mennonites were compelled by the government to teach the Russian language in their schools at all levels.

Aside from these, there was yet another element that played a part in the move to emigrate — the lure of America. Both Canada and the United States needed settlers to open up the vast tracts of land in the West and of these two countries, Canada was by far the most aggressive in obtaining colonists. Consequently, after letters were exchanged, the Canadian government asked a German businessman from Ontario, Wm. Hespeler, to go to Russia in 1872 and encourage the Mennonites to come to Manitoba.

Though not a Mennonite himself, Hespeler acted as a representative of the Mennonites on various occasions in future years. As a result of his first meeting with the Mennonite leaders in Russia, agreement was made to send a delegation representing those groups wishing to leave Russia, to Canada.

Not nearly all the Mennonites in Russia wished to leave at this time. Many who had intended to emigrate when news first arrived that the government was to enforce compulsory military service, changed their minds when the government realized that the Mennonites would make good their threat to leave and indicated a compromise. (In the end, in 1880, the Mennonites were allowed to substitute forestry work for military service.)

Consequently, it was the more conservative Mennonites who sent delegates to Manitoba in 1873. The delegates who later actually concluded the agreement with the Canadian government were Jacob Peters and Heinrich Wiebe of the Bergthal Colony, Cornelius Toews of the Gruenfeld Colony and David Klassen of the Heuboden Colony.¹

The delegation also included Leonhard Sudermann of Berdianski, the elders of the Alexanderwohl congregation, the elders of the Swiss and the Prussian Mennonites in Volynia, and several representatives of the Hutterite settlement in Molotschna. The delegation was joined by Wilhelm Ewert, a preacher in West Prussia and a wealthy Mennonite landowner.

The mission of the delegates was to ensure special privileges and find a suitable tract of land capable of supporting the large forthcoming migration. At this point there was clearly no longer any question of whether or not to emigrate, but where to. The decision to leave Russia had been made in 1871.

¹ The delegates who arrived in Manitoba in 1873 were the following: representing the Bergthal Mennonites were minister Heinrich Wiebe, Oberschulze Jacob Peters and a rich landowner, Cornelius Buhr, who paid his own passage. Representing the Molotschna Mennonites were Jacob Buhler and Leonhard Suderman. The Kleine Gemeinde had Cornelius Toews and David Klassen. The delegation also consisted of two Hutterian brethren, Paul Tschetter and Lohrenz Tschetter, the two Prussian Mennonites Tobias Unruh and Andreas Schrag and Wilhelm Ewert.

Inspection of the land

The Mennonite delegation arrived in Winnipeg on June 17, 1873 after visiting several places in the U.S. and Ontario. They were received by both the governor and premier.

On June 18, a party of 24 left Winnipeg with five wagons to see the eight townships of land which had been reserved for the Mennonites in southeastern Manitoba just below the parish of Ste. Anne along the Seine River and beside and west of the English settlement of Clearsprings.

It was not an encouraging expedition for the delegates.

The party crossed the Red River, passed through St. Boniface and followed the Dawson Road to Ste. Anne. A steady rain forced the delegates, riding in open wagons, to seek cover under buffalo hides and blankets. Then the lead wagon took a wrong road and the whole caravan had to battle through swamp for half a day. The horses nearly sank in the bogs and the passengers were forced to walk long distances.

By nightfall the caravan arrived at the Hudson's Bay Co. store in Ste. Anne and the party was grateful to find lodging there for the night.

Leonhard Suderman, one of the delegates, remarked in his diary that night that though this was the second half of June and a time when the crops would be starting to ripen in South Russia, the land here still appeared to be too wet for seeding.

In the afternoon of June 19, the caravan proceeded south and by twilight reached the northeast corner of the block of land reserved for the Mennonites.

Five tents were pitched and after an evening meal around campfires, songs of praise to God were sung by the delegates. Sleep was nearly impossible because of the mosquitoes.

Only four of the eight townships of the reserved land (called the East Reserve) were inspected by the delegates during the next two days but by then the majority of delegates had decided that they'd seen enough and wished to return to Winnipeg.

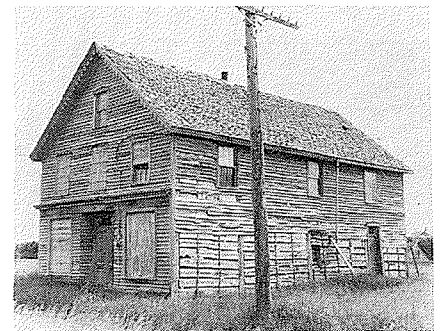
Upon arrival there, five of the delegates, Paul and Lorenz Tschetter, Unruh, Ewert and one other delegate learned that a steam-

ship was leaving Winnipeg for Fargo that night and decided to leave Manitoba and seek land in Dakota.

This move was hardly surprising. As experienced agriculturists, they could see the difficulties of farming in the Manitoba wilderness. The climate was severe, the land was often marshy, the mosquitoes were overwhelming and the Metis struck the delegates as being undesirable neighbors.

Yet, the **Kleine Gemeinde** and Bergthal delegates decided to stay and see more. On June 23 they left for the Riding Mountain area in the western part of the province under the guidance of Wm. Hespeler who was leaving no stone unturned in encouraging these delegates to stay in the province.

Though the land in this part of the province was preferable to that which they had seen in the East Reserve, the delegates were hesitant about settling here because they were worried about the greater distance they would be from Winnipeg and the markets.



This old Hudson's Bay store, still standing in Ste. Anne today, sheltered the Russian delegates for one night, June 18, 1873 when the group passed through on its way south to see the land the federal government had set aside for the Mennonites. Delegate Leonard Suderman wrote in his diary that night that their host was friendly and bid them welcome. The delegates were very pleased to have found accommodations here as they had experienced a difficult day's journey and the thought of pitching tents in the wet and swampy ground wasn't too inviting. Many of the Mennonites that followed the delegates also became familiar with this building as trade was often carried on here (as well as in Winnipeg) before the Mennonites established their own stores.

—Derksen Printers photo



This photograph was taken in Winnipeg on June 18, 1873 in front of the Dominion Lands Office where the Mennonite delegates from Russia were photographed (to their embarrassment) before leaving on a trip to inspect the land around Steinbach and area. Delegate Tobias Unruh wrote the following account of this part of the long journey in his diary:

June 17. Arrived at our destination. Left the boat and walked into town. This city is fortified and called Winnipeg. Both the city and fort were built only four years ago. The city is located in Manitoba. Upon our arrival Mr. Hespeler and Suderman spoke with the governor. He was very friendly and extended a hearty welcome to our visit. He spoke of the fertile lands and cheap prices that were available in his dominion. Later we were all introduced to the ministry and he commanded them to invite us for lunch. They also wished us many blessings and sang a blessing hymn for us. In the P.M. teams and wagons were provided by the minister of the public works to take us through the country showing us the land. We saw good land with wheat and barley; gardens with nice vegetables. Everything was good.

June 18. Five wagons were secured and rigged up to take us over the steppes that we might view the whole country. Two wagons carried food, tents and equipment. Three were filled with people. The route which we were to take was mapped out and the rigs with equipment went ahead. When we were ready to leave the three rigs loaded with people were lined up and photographed. This act grieved me seriously. We had come here as pilgrims and strangers, labouring in distress, seeking a home in a country where we could, with our children together, live according to the dictates of our conscience, and now we were, as it were, arrayed and classed highly. This photograph should reach the British authorities that they could see the warm reception that had been extended to us. Yes, when I consider our miserable condition, my eyes often run over. I cannot hide my face. My heart was deeply humiliated. When this was all over our journey began. After driving a while we came to a creek. Here we stopped at noon. Here we encountered a heavy rain. The soil was still virgin prairie. It was rather low land, the horses mired down. This would be a very good country if ditches were provided so that the low places could be drained. We viewed about 16 square miles of land.

—Manitoba Archives photo
courtesy Bill Schroeder

After seeing the Riding Mountains area they began the trip back and through no fault of their own, became involved in an incident which, had it not been for the calm intervention of Wm. Hespeler, would have drastically changed the course of Mennonite history in Manitoba.

The party had arrived at a stopping place for night on the White Horse plains some 30 miles west of Winnipeg. It was July 1, 1873 and the Metis were celebrating Dominion Day. One of the Canadian drivers hit a drunken Metis with a whip and the enraged man gathered his friends to seek revenge.

With the able assistance of Wm. Hespeler, an ex-army officer, the delegates were taken to a room which was then barricaded. Mr. Hespeler immediately sent for help to Winnipeg and stood guard at the door of the room all night with a revolver in one hand and a dagger in the other.

The tense situation was finally resolved in the morning when mounted soldiers arrived from Winnipeg and the ringleaders were caught.

The delegates returned to Winnipeg the next day and then took another tour through the southern part of the East Reserve which they had not seen in the first visit.

Though the land in the southern part of the Reserve is even poorer than the north, and though this was probably apparent to the delegates, four of them nevertheless proceeded to Ottawa to make final arrangements.

While it may seem strange that these four delegates decided to settle in Manitoba when conditions generally appeared adverse, there were several reasons for the decision.

Most important was the fact that the delegates were willing to accept land that they knew would be inferior when they came. More important even than good farmland was positive assurance that they would be exempted from military service. This assurance appeared to be much more readily available from the Canadian than from the U.S. government.

The following letter was written to the government on July 23, 1873 by the delegates.

Mennonite Delegation Report
of their proceedings and stating their views
re Settlement in Manitoba

REFLECTIONS ON OUR HERITAGE

Source — Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa
No. 8753 (Translation)

Ottawa, 23 July 1873

Dear Sir: —

In accordance with your kind invitation which has been delivered to us through Mr. Hespeler to visit Canada, and in particular the province of Manitoba, we have done so, and in particular the 8 townships which you have reserved for us for the purpose of settlement.

We beg to say that we have found the said Province to answer for our future homes and, if it is the wish of God, we will, joined by our Colonists, go to Manitoba and make it our future home. Your liberal offers with which you are favouring us, we hope will turn out with the support of God, beneficial to us and equally beneficial to the land of our adoption. We hope by next spring (1874) to begin with the first immigration; and in the probable number two hundred families. Should we, after the arrival of the first of our immigrants, think that another location than the present one which you have reserved for us, would suit us better, then we hope that you will exchange the reserve to such parts as we should find preferable, providing such parts should not by that time be taken up by other settlers or by the Railway.

Sd. David Klassen, delegate Heuboden Colony
Jacob Peters, delegate Bergthal Colony
Heinrich Wiebe, delegate Bergthal Colony
Cornelius Toews, delegate Gruenfeld Colony
All in Southern Russia
The Honorable Minister of Agriculture

In reply to the above letter the four delegates received the following reply from John Lowe, secretary, Department of Agriculture. (The Department of Agriculture was in charge of settlement in these years.)

Ottawa, 25th July, 1873

Gentlemen:

I have the honour, under the instruction of the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date

the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers, and to the immunities offered to Mennonites which are established by Statute Law and by orders of his Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg.

1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

2. An Order-in-Council was passed on the 3rd of March last to reserve eight townships in the Province of Manitoba for free grants on the condition of settlement as provided in the Dominion Lands Act, that is to say, "Any person who is head of a family or has obtained the age of 21 years shall be entitled to be entered for $\frac{1}{4}$ section or a less quantity of unappropriated Dominion lands, for a purpose of securing a homestead right in respect thereof."

3. The said reserve of eight townships is for the exclusive use of the Mennonites, and the said free grants of $\frac{1}{4}$ section to consist of 160 acres each, as defined by the Act.

4. Should the Mennonite Settlement extend beyond the eight townships set aside by the Order-in-Council of March 3rd last, other townships will be in the same way reserved to meet the full requirements of Mennonite immigration.

5. If next spring the Mennonite settlers on viewing the eight townships set aside for their use should decide to exchange them for any other unoccupied eight townships, such exchange will be allowed.

6. In addition to the free grant of $\frac{1}{4}$ section or 160 acres to every person over 21 years of age on the condition of settlement the right to purchase the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ of the section at \$1.00 per acre is granted by law so as to complete the whole section of 640 acres which is the largest quantity of land the Government will grant a patent for to one person.

7. The settler will receive a patent for a free grant after three years residence in accordance with the terms of the Dominion Lands Act.

8. In event of the death of the settler, the lawful heirs can claim the patent for the free grant upon proof that settlement duties for three years have been performed.

9. From the moment of occupation the settler acquires a "homestead right" in the land.

10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.

12. The Government of Canada will undertake to furnish passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry for Mennonite families of good character for the sum of \$30.00 for adult persons over the age of eight years, for persons under eight years half price or \$15.00 and for infants under one year, \$3.00.

13. The minister specially authorizes me to state that this arrangement as to price shall not be changed for the seasons of 1874, 1875, or 1876.

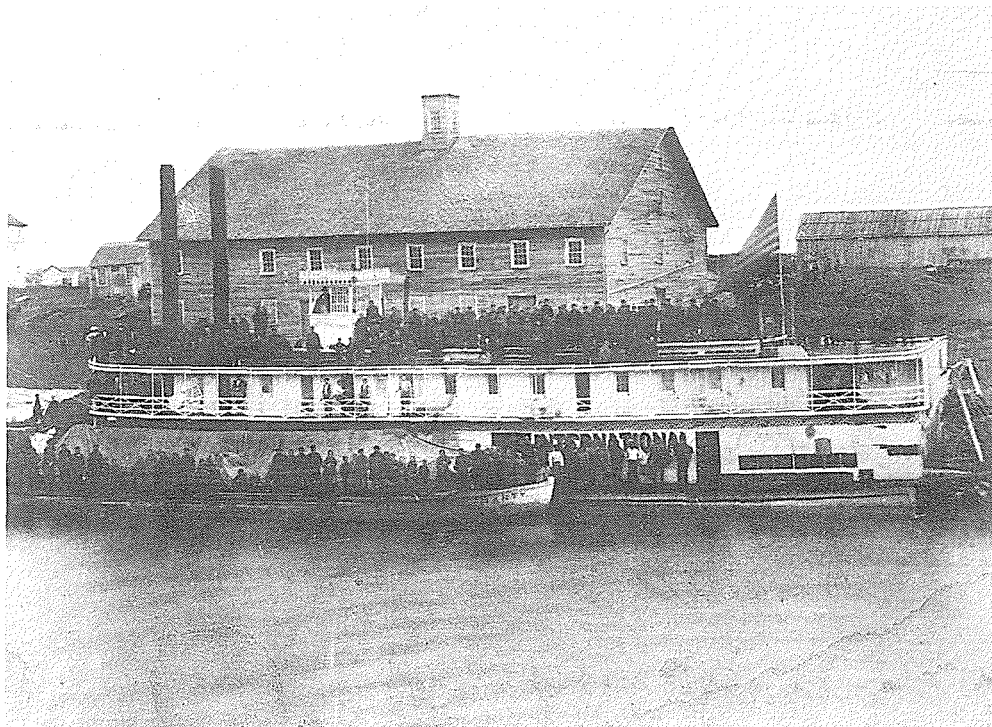
14. I am further to state that if it is changed thereafter the price shall not up to the year 1882 exceed \$40.00 per adult and children in proportion, subject to the approval of Parliament.

15. The immigrants will be provided with provisions on the portion of the journey between Liverpool and Collingwood but between other portions of the journey they are to find their own provisions.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
(Sgd). John Lowe
Secretary, Department of Agriculture

Messrs. David Klassen
Jacob Peters
Heinrich Wiebe
Cornelius Toews
Mennonite Delegates from Southern
Russia.

Though the Mennonites have always regarded the above letter as the Magna Carta defining their special rights and privileges, Professor E. K. Francis in his book *In Search of Utopia* explains how this was not quite the case. All that Mr. Lowe intended to do was offer an authoritative interpretation of the existing laws of the Dominion. It contained, in fact, a number of legal inaccuracies, which didn't hinder immediate emigration and came to light only in much later years. (See chapter: **Trek to Paraguay.**)



The Hudson's Bay Company steamer International at Winnipeg in 1874 with the first, or one of the first, groups of Mennonite settlers from Russia. The Mennonites created a small economic boom among Winnipeg merchants with their purchases of basic necessities. Winnipeg's paper, **The Manitoban**, estimated that the Mennonites spent \$50,000 in Winnipeg in the summer of 1874. After having carried these supplies onboard the International they steamed back upstream along the Red to the mouth of the Rat River where they disembarked.

—Manitoba Archives

The migration

When the Bergthal and **Kleine Gemeinde** delegates returned to their villages in Russia¹ enthusiasm for migration quickly mounted.

It was an incredible undertaking. Not just individuals, but whole communities were to be moved from the steppes of the Ukraine to the unknown Manitoba wilderness.

Lands and most goods had to be disposed of in less than a year. Passports had to be obtained, arrangements made.

Years of toil were sometimes exchanged for a few rubles as the market for property and articles was quickly saturated.

Finally, the day of departure came for the first emigrants. It was May, 1874. The Mennonites boarded trains and looked back at their settlements for the last time. No one knew what lay ahead.

It was a long and difficult journey and after reaching Hamburg by train,² the trek continued by ship to Quebec. From here some of the poorer emigrants went to Ontario where they were taken in by resident Mennonites and allowed to earn some money before continuing on to Manitoba.

Most went on by boat and rail to Duluth where they first travelled by rail to Fargo - Moorehead and then on the Red River to a point near Niverville where the Rat River empties into the Red.

The long hot days and cool starry bright nights of the western Canadian summer of 1874 saw the arrival of the first contingent of new Mennonite settlers. They disembarked from the old Hudson Bay Co. steamer, "International" July 31, 1874. Clouds of venomous mosquitoes greeted their arrival and smudge fires built by Jacob Shantz, the man in charge

of reception arrangements, only partially discouraged their furious attack.

Women and children settled down temporarily in the government reception huts which were four crudely-built structures 20 by 100 feet. The men set out to choose sites for future villages. At a place which they named Gruenfeld, just about where the village of Kleefeld now stands, 19 families³ built the first Mennonite village in Canada's west.

Then, early in September, another 18 families⁴ arrived and were temporarily housed in the homes of the Gruenfeld villages, many of whom were relatives of theirs. Later in the same month these 18 families set out in the creaking ox carts loaned to them by the Gruenfelders to locate a village site of their own.

The first frosts, harbingers of approaching



The first Mennonite settlers from Russia disembarked from their steamboat at or near this point close to Niverville where the Rat River empties into the Red. Some temporary shelter had been provided on the banks of the Red River but the settlers continued on to the four large immigration sheds about 2½ miles south of Niverville (and some six miles from the point of disembarkation). These sheds, built by J. Y. Shantz, were each 20 feet by 100 feet and divided into 12 rooms.

—Manitoba Archives

winter, had yellowed the poplar leaves on the eastern fringes of the new Red River settlements as these 18 families pulled their oxen to a halt along the edge of a small creek 20 miles east of the Red River. It was September 18, 1874. As the ox carts stopped, the women and children chattered excitedly in their native Low German dialect, then silence settled over the little group. They gazed with something akin to awe at this place which was to be their new home.

These were the men and women who founded Steinbach. The name of the new village was derived from two German words meaning "stone" and "creek" so called because of the small creek which rippled over the stones nearby.

During the late summer and autumn of 1874, and again the following spring, this same scene re-enacted itself many times. Altogether, about 54 picturesque villages sprang up in the area east of the Red River, which the settlers themselves designated as "East Reserve".

To these villages were given meaningful German names like Gruenfeld (Green Field), Blumenort (Flower Place), Silberfeld (Silver Field), Gruenthal (Green Valley), and Blumen-gart (Flower Garden).

1. The Mennonites who came to Canada in 1874 were from the Bergthal and Kleine Gemeinde colonies. The Bergthal Colony at this point consisted of five villages: Bergthal, Schoental, Schoenfeld, Heuboden and Friedrichstal. Bergthal was the first daughter colony of Chortitza and was located on the Bodni River, a small tributary of the Berda, about 15 miles south of Grunau and 25 miles northwest of Mariupol. The colony was founded in 1836 and in the years from 1874-76 the entire colony, 500 families, immigrated to Manitoba.

The Kleine Gemeinde people had come from the Molotschna Colony and lived just south of Fuerstenland, not far from Odessa.

2. The Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites took the railroad from Odessa to Hamburg while Bergthal group went by rail from Nikoleioski, a station on the Tagerog—Kharkov line. Both groups departed from Hamburg to Hull, England, then across to Liverpool and from there to Quebec.

3. Original Gruenfelders: Abram Loewen Jr., Mrs. S. Cornelius Penner, Johann Isaac, Johan Esau, Cornelius Loewen, Abram Schellenberg, Johan Toews, Jr., Johan Hiebert, Abram Dueck, Peter Dueck (teacher), Johan Dueck Jr., Johan Dueck Sr., Jacob Dueck, Johan Toews Sr.

4. Original Steinbachers with number of children: Klass Friesen two, Kornelius Fast four, Gerhard Warkentin none, Heinrich Brandt three, Rev. Jacob Barkman (leader) seven, Kornelius Goossen none, Jacob S. Friesen none, Abram S. Friesen none, Peter Toews three, Johann R. Reimer none, Klass R. Reimer seven, Gerhardt Giesbrecht two, Johann Wiebe three, Jacob T. Barkman none, Peter Barkman three, Johann S. Friesen none, Heinrich Fast three, Franz Kroeker three.

Within three years 1,200 Mennonite families (6,000 people) were transplanted from the Ukraine to Manitoba. Some of these went to the West Reserve in the Altona area. The whole undertaking was looked upon as a small miracle.

Difficulties, however, arose as soon as the steamboats docked. Dissatisfaction with conditions grew quickly. Water was not immediately available and attempts to dig wells at the embarkation site resulted in two men nearly losing their lives. Some 30 *Kleine Gemeinde* families moved out to establish two villages on the Scratching River.

Order was regained quickly, however, and while the women and children remained in the immigration buildings and tents the men set out to find suitable locations for villages or buy provisions in Winnipeg.

Reception

Manitoba, at the time of the arrival of the first settlers in 1874 was a largely unsettled area. Winnipeg, the capital of the province, was a crossroads settlement (population in 1871 was 240) and there was no municipal government and no public school system. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police were only organized that same year.

Settlement, by the French (or Metis) and the English from Ontario, was restricted along the rivers and streams.

Probably because the Mennonites were Protestant, they were welcomed by the Anglo-Saxon Canadians. The Catholic French remained silent.

First personal contact was pleasant because the Mennonites' first task was to obtain supplies. The *Manitoban* estimated that the Mennonites left \$50,000 in Winnipeg in 1874 and purchased all manner of goods from oxen to hay forks. Naturally, this boost to the local economy was favorably received by the merchants.

After this buying spree, however, the Mennonites went to the Reserve and little more was seen or heard from them for some time.

Neither was there any clash with other nationalities within the Reserve. While there was a settlement of Metis north of the Reserve at Ste. Anne, the only farmers to precede the Mennonites to the area were the Clearsprings settlers who had begun settling there in 1870. Though the Clearsprings settlers were at a loss to explain the strange customs and retiring manners of the Mennonites, relations were good and the Clearsprings settlers often assisted the Mennonites in the first difficult years of settlement.

2. Village settlement

The hardships encountered by the first Mennonite settlers in Manitoba are best described by the settlers themselves. Though none of those who arrived here in 1874 as adults are living today, several wrote short articles of their experiences in later years.

The following articles were written by three men who were part of the first groups of settlers. Their accounts, never before published in English, leave a rare record for future generations.

All three articles were written for the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Mennonites in Manitoba.

Recollections of the early days

by Frank Goossen

(translated from German)

It was in 1874, the last day of July, as we were travelling down the Red River to Winnipeg. There was such a terrific windstorm that the sun was shining on one side in one second and on the other, the next. The river was also narrower at that time and with many trees on the banks so that the squirrels could jump from one side to the other.

On August 1 we reached Winnipeg. Many took advantage of this opportunity and bought their necessities including yokes of oxen.

On August 2 we were taken back by steamer towards Niverville where we were given temporary shelter. Here we were able to thoroughly wash and clean ourselves. We even combed the lice from our heads. They were already full grown and when they dropped, you could hear them hit the floor.

It was dry at this time of year and we had no water so a well was dug. Two men fell in the well and were only saved after considerable effort. One was Peter Reimer, married, and the other, John Hiebert, who was single at that time. Both recovered from their injuries.

Not far from here there were some low lying

areas where we dug holes. Water would settle in the holes at night and some people would rise early in the morning to dip it.

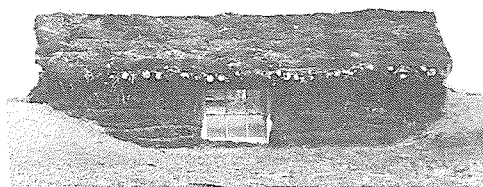
The men and older boys went out from here to take homesteads and arrange the villages.

Because we only got around to making hay in September and October, the feed was sparse and hard. Many had only *sarais* to serve as house and barn and both people and livestock suffered from the cold. The *semlins*, especially those lined with boards, were much warmer.

(Explanation: Editor's note: A *semlin* was constructed by digging a hole several feet deep and building up a wall of sod around it. Some were built big enough to contain livestock. A number of families spent a year living in these shelters. A *sarai* was nothing more than a large thatched roof that was held up at one end by long poles. The other end rested on the ground. The shelter was closed-in in front by logs, grass or boards. It was a much poorer shelter than the *semlin*.)

In 1875 I herded cattle for the Gruenfelders a great deal. The newly-arrived immigrants of 1875 also gave me livestock to herd and promised to pay me. I have yet to see some of this money...

My foster parents were poor so I had to herd barefoot. In fall, my father gave me a pair of felt boots. My feet were not accustomed to



The first settlers in Manitoba arrived in the late summer of 1874 and there was little time in the rush to get established before winter for building permanent houses. As a result various types of temporary shelters were built. Most common of these was the **semlin** (sod hut) which the first Mennonites to leave Prussia for Russia in 1789 had built. The **semlin** above, built by John C. Reimer, Steinbach for the 60th anniversary of the first Mennonite settlement in Manitoba is an accurate replica of the original shelters. Construction was simple. A hole three feet deep was dug and sods piled up another three feet around the hole. Sods were some 16 inches wide. Windows were inserted at ground level. The roof was built by laying poplar tree logs across the sod walls and covering these with earth, hay or both. The size of these huts varied but average dimensions were 15 by 35 feet. If part of the shelter was to be shared by livestock, the inside would be partitioned off.

footwear, however, and suffered from boots and abcesses that only went away after I smeared them with wet clay.

At age 14 I wore canvas pants made from Russian sacks and went to church barefoot. As the grasshoppers ate up everything in 1875, starvation threatened.

On June 2, 1875 quite a few people went to Winnipeg, including Jacob Barkman and Jacob Friesen of Steinbach. On their return they stayed at St. Boniface for night. It was then that they realized there were a number of things they had forgotten to purchase in Winnipeg. They decided, consequently, to return to the city the next morning. Daylight saw strong winds, however, with some snow and the man who operated the ferry across the Red River didn't want to make a trip in such weather.

Consequently, Barkman and Friesen hired another man who agreed to make the crossing. The boat shook badly and as the men neared the cable on which the ferry ran, they grabbed it. This caused the boat to capsize. The men

held on tight to the cable but were unable to bring themselves to shore because the cold water paralyzed their arms and legs. Both men drowned. The operator saved his life by swimming to shore.

Tragedy struck the early settlers

Many people suffered during the winter of 1875-76. One family, called "**grosze Duecken**" (big Duecks) living between Gruenfeld and Rosenfeld, was so hardpressed that two members of the family became sick from malnutrition and died. When this became known, they were assisted by the Gruenfelders who brought them milk and food.

In 1876 there was already more life noticeable among us. Peter Wiens and Johann Braun built a threshing machine $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of present-day Kleefeld and two second-hand Holland windmills were also set up—one by Johann Janzen and one by Corn. Toews. The latter set his up at Gruenfeld.

Because, as stated before, food was hard to come by in the first years, we were happy in 1876 when we received a harvest. The Gruenfelders had also bought a threshing machine and after a little wheat was threshed many fathers would take a bag on their shoulders and carry it to the above-mentioned windmill. How wonderful that bread from the first flour tasted!

In December, 1876 many of those in Blumenort and Blumenhof left together to travel to their newly-purchased bush for purposes of dividing it among themselves. There had been heavy snowfall all day and towards evening it began to storm. At the east end of Blumenort the party stopped and a check was made to see if all were still present. All were accounted for but by then Henry Wiebe said his hands were already frozen. As the journey continued the party took what comfort they could in the fact that they were nearly home.

In the morning they found the above mentioned Henry Wiebe frozen to death on the Giroux line.

This storm was also encountered by Abr. Isaak, presently of Kleefeld, who had gone

to the mill for flour. When he came to three-quarter mile north of the Kleefeld bridge, he no longer knew his direction so he unharnessed the oxen and let them go. He himself dug some snow out of a drift and crawled in. He had a great deal of difficulty staying awake but as the storm let up after midnight he spotted a light at Erdman Penner's, just over a mile away.

Suffering from his exposure though he was, he managed to make it to safety. The Penners took him in and treated his frozen limbs with medicine and by rubbing. In the morning they took him to Gruenfeld with their horses.

One of his oxen came to Gruenfeld in the morning. The other must have found the snow in the creek bed too deep to cross.

On April 1, 1878 Abr. Friesen and Johann Hoepfner walked to Winnipeg. They were strong and healthy men, and good walkers but it snowed the whole day and they became completely soaked and numb. As they came to Kronstal it got colder and stormier.

At this time Frank Janzen happened to look out and see two men sitting on his front fence. He went to investigate and found Friesen and Hoepfner sitting there. Both appeared to have taken leave of their senses. Janzen took the two in and after warming them up and feeding them they returned to normal.

In 1879 Jacob, Peter and David Doerksen had gone to Greta to visit and make preparations at their future homesite. As they returned home June 25 they came to the Rat River. They planned to cross with their oxen and large wagon but the stream was deeper than they expected and the wagon started to disintegrate. Jacob fell into the water and Peter wanted to come to his rescue. As Jacob grabbed hold of him they both went under. They were both seen one more time. David grabbed a side board from the wagon and was able to reach shore while the other two drowned.

In 1879 the elements were quite restless. There was a good deal of wind and storm. It was in this year, also, that Rev. H. Duerksen's first wife (from Schoental) was hit by lightning.

One family, the Cor. Epps of Schoental, experienced a real tragedy at this time.

As the parents had taken some of their children to the neighbors for immunization, some of the other children at home had played with fire. The clothes of their seven-year-old son

caught fire and two hours later he was a corpse.

In the same year lightning hit one of the farm buildings and all the Epps' property burned to the ground.

In 1881 a wind storm took all they had. Miraculously, their lives were saved. Other peoples' buildings were also lost to the storm at this time.

Recollections of the time of the first immigration

by Klaas W. Reimer

(translated from German)

Encouraged by the 50th anniversary celebrations of the first immigration of the Mennonites to Manitoba held Sept. 26, 1924 near Steinbach, I will try and recall several experiences of those early days.

The wet autumn of this year (1924) reminds me of the time we built the simple shelters for ourselves and our cattle in 1874. At that time, as now, both the people and livestock suffered from the wet conditions.

It was exactly 50 years ago that we arrived at the place that is presently Steinbach and pitched our tent under a poplar tree that no longer stands.

After we had found a place to hang the Russian clock and the ham that we had bought in Duluth, and established ourselves to the point where we could cook, eat and sleep and care for our bedridden mother in a warm and dry place, we took the oxen and wagon into the bush.

The bush from which we chopped out the wood for our sarai was situated where my brother Johann W. Reimer presently lives (NW¼ 34-6-6). At that time this was Crown land.

After the trees were felled they had to be dragged out and here our father, my brother Abram and myself were pushed to the limits of our endurance.

Father would take the thick bottom end of the tree and Abram and myself the thin end. Because we both often stumbled and fell, father often had to pull both the tree and us. I was only 13 years old at the time.

As the trees were then taken home, the driver of the wagon had to lead the oxen down Steinbach's main street because at the time it was just wide enough for two teams to pass if the drivers led the oxen rather than walked beside them.

Once we had the logs out and piled, we were ready to start building. For the livestock, we dug a semlin. The rafters were set in the ground, like in a sarai, and covered with reeds. This cover was actually too thin for the Manitoba winter.

After the building was completed we started making hay. The grass was already frozen but it was gathered up from under the snow nevertheless and carried home. As the winter came and we fed the livestock this hay, the animals didn't want to eat it. Some English farmers who had settled in this area earlier, however, sold us some green hay which the livestock did eat.

As the weather turned ever colder the livestock started suffering from the cold in the inadequate shelter. Then, suddenly, another problem. The bought hay was depleted and the frozen hay was worthless as feed. We had no choice but to bake bread for the cows and oxen. So, in a way, we ate with the livestock out of the same bag.

The winter became steadily colder. To protect the livestock, we took and hung a big piece of tarpaulin in front of the cows and then regularly opened the door so that the warmth from the house could go into the barn.

That is how we brought ourselves and our livestock through the winter. When spring finally came we let the livestock out of the "ark". The poor animals were so happy to get out and into the fresh air that they tried to jump in the air, but they were so weak they were hardly able and often collapsed.

I saw a cow at one settler's place that had its horns, ears and tail frozen right off. At another place I saw an ox that had its forefeet frozen to the knees and had to be slaughtered.

It was a hard winter, yet, God be given the glory, we did not have to go hungry because we had flour. This wasn't as white as it is today. As a matter of fact it was quite dark and rather bitter as well. And if we lacked yeast, we still had salt and water and the bread that we baked was palatable.

Instead of today's coffee, made from real cof-

fee beans, we drank **prips**. This, however, wasn't made from grain because we had none, but from bread crusts. And we didn't drink it out of cups either, as is the custom today. Instead, we all spooned it out of one common bowl.

Lard was another item we didn't have too much of. Our father had bought one five-pound box of this now-superfluous product and this had to last 10 people for a long cold winter.

The potatoes weren't fried in lard but in water and then salted. They were very good.

The winter finally came to end and with the spring of 1875 we gained new hope. Cultivation of the land began with our half-starved livestock. If two oxen weren't available to do the work, a cow had to fill in. With hope in the future harvest, the last dollar was spent on seed.

The new seed came up very promising but then came heavy trials. The grasshoppers destroyed everything that we had placed so much hope on. The voracious creatures came in such a mass that they covered the earth. Wherever you put your foot down you stepped on grasshoppers and if you'd laid down your jacket or any other piece of clothing it would immediately be eaten. When evening came, practically every shrub, every house, was covered with grasshoppers.

When I recall these first years of settlement with the hard work, with the many disappointments but still with faith in God, and then compare those times with today, then it seems as though we were closer to our God in those days. It appears to me as though the real love and humility as well as the child-like devotion is no longer apparent in many of our people.

I recall vividly one Sunday during that first summer as the grass was already green. My grandparents as well as my uncles and aunts were visiting at our place. We were sitting in the grass around the wagon and the conversation dealt with the earnest question: Where do we go from here? What are we to do for a livelihood?

My father and uncle A. S. Friesen suggested that we move to the United States. Very decisively, however, our beloved grandmother then said: "No children; that we do not want to do; the gracious God has led us here and we want to trust in Him and try and make our living here. God will not withhold his blessings and we will once again have our bread."

Her words did not lie latent; we gained new courage and all remained here.

If such a strong faith in God as was demonstrated so frequently by our forefathers could become more common now, how much better would it not be for us and all of our endeavors.

The villages were settled according to a unique plan

Twenty-one villages were founded in the East Reserve in 1874. The village settlement plan which the Mennonite settlers brought with them from Russia originated with the immigrant forbears during their sojourn in northeast Germany. It represented something new in western Canada.

In a typical Mennonite village, the buildings stood in a line along one side of the village street. House and barn were built together under one roof because it was cheaper to build, much more convenient for choring and discouraged thieves.

Behind each combination house and barn were one or more outbuildings and a good-sized plot of land for use as a barnyard, flower or vegetable garden or orchard.

The quarter sections legally belonging to each homesteader were pooled. Each villager was entitled to use a given productive land, and each entitled to use a given and equal amount of hay and wood from the hay meadows and woodlots. This division was voluntary, and unlike that in Russia, unsupported by law. All livestock was herded into a common pasture.

The school and church were located in the centre of the village and the grist mill generally stood at one end. Social services, such as a co-operative fire insurance scheme and a co-operative welfare assistance fund gave villagers a measure of social security.

This, then, was the kind of settlement which characterized the East Reserve in the years following 1874. (There were also a few rugged individuals who preferred to settle outside the village on homesteads.)

Despite the fact that there were no crops for the first two years, the villages in the East Reserve grew. Little if any time was spent on trivialities and the women joined the men on the fields.

By 1876 there were about 35 villages scattered over the Reserve and in 1877, there were 38 though some were only small hamlets. Work in clearing land and building was laborious. Food was scarce during even the second winter and the Ontario Mennonites and federal government had to assist with loans. The federal government loan was for \$100,000.

Strides forward were made by the Mennonites, however, and some of the difficulties in the first years paid off in experience later.

The compact village units were valuable in the first years. They fostered a strong social coherence and allowed settlers to help one another and share the heavier workloads. In a difficult country to settle, any help they could give each other was invaluable.

Village sites were established in the more attractive areas on higher and open land. Many were built on the gravel ridges which, as remnants of the beaches of what was once Lake Agassiz, criss-crossed the area. These gravel ridges also lent themselves well for roads and some of the roads today follow the trails the settlers used along the ridges.

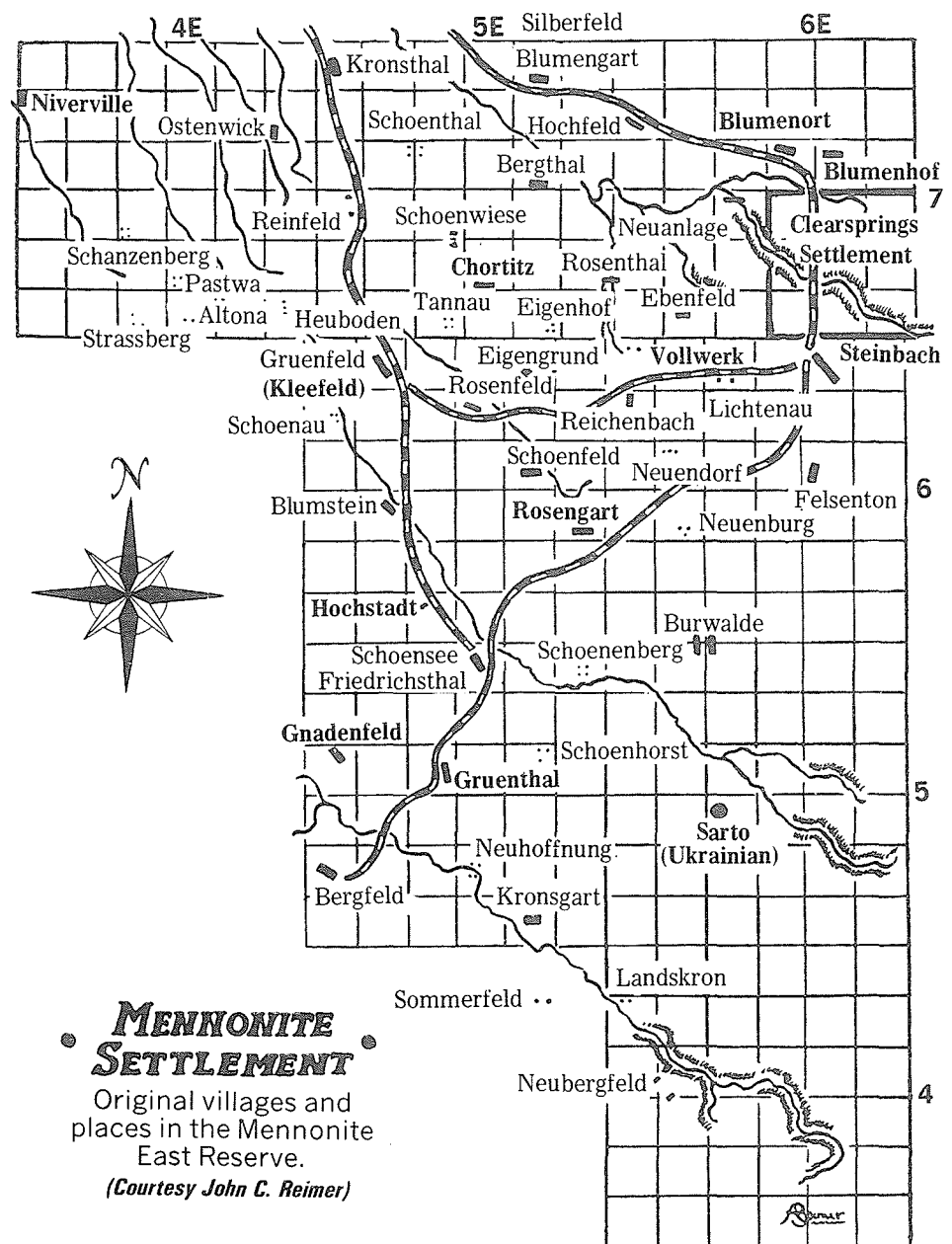
The first homes, as explained in a previous chapter, were crude semlins or sarais, but after the first winter, better lodgings were built.

Though a sawmill was operating in Steinbach in 1876 and another at Blumenort in 1878, these mills could not meet the demand (and settlers usually couldn't meet the cost) so buildings were being built from logs.

Unfamiliar with building log houses and barns though they were, (in Russia houses were built of bricks) the Mennonites learned quickly from the Clearsprings settlers and produced really well-built cabins and barns, mostly in the Red River style.

J. Y. Shantz, Ontario Mennonite who worked with the Canadian government in getting the Russian Mennonites settled in Manitoba, described the Red River style in the following way in his book:

" . . . for a house 16 feet by 24 feet the sills are laid, six posts are hewn square, one for each corner and one in the middle lengthwise, grooves of two inches are cut in the posts in which plates are placed to hold the posts — then timbers are cut to the proper lengths and a two inch tenant made at either end to fit the groove in the posts — these timbers so prepared are slipped in between the posts in the



Though records indicate some 54 villages were settled by the Mennonites in the East Reserve, a fair number of these consisted of only a few farms and when these were abandoned, the village site sometimes disappeared without a trace. The names printed in bold type marks the towns, villages or areas which are still in existence today.

grooves, one on top of the other, until the spaces are filled up to the plates, which are from 8 feet to 10 feet above the sill — thus forming the sides and ends of the building; the cracks and openings are all plastered over on the inside and outside and then whitewashed . . . buildings thus constructed afford a warm house, and I would recommend settlers with limited means to adopt this plan for their houses, where the timber is so small that they cannot make them in the old Canadian style."

The roofs were thatched until the settlers could afford shingles around the turn of the century.

The barns were constructed similar to the house but not as solidly. While the method of building was Canadian, the style was not. The Mennonites in most cases still built the barn and house together in the old European style. Not only was this cheaper to build but it was more convenient. Most barns were kept very clean. (See illustration).

Wood for building the homes and farms was cut where it was available. Some was taken from within the Reserve and some bought from William Hespeler who had timber rights on the Crown Land in what is now the RM of La Broquerie.

Few of the villages had stores in the first years but some provisions for educating the children were made almost immediately.

Gardens were quickly established and these were a prime source of food. Cows were herded together by the village herdsmen who sometimes doubled as the teacher in the winter months.

The villages were managed democratically. Settlers elected from among themselves one man who was called the **Schulz** or mayor. This man, together with the owners of the homesteads and several assistants (**bie setasch**) would manage village affairs at regular meetings called **Schulzenbotts**.

Because the Mennonites purposely wished to isolate themselves, and because there were barriers such as language, customs, and religion between them and other groups, some people criticized them. Jealousy at the success of the Mennonites in pioneering open land away from the rivers and streams became quite apparent at times but, in general, over-all public reaction to the Mennonites remained favourable.

The overwhelmingly favorable report Lord

Dufferin made about the Mennonite settlements also made an impression. That his report was sincere is confirmed in that he was quite uncomplimentary in his remarks about other groups who arrived in the province around the same time as the Mennonites.

The Mennonite house plan

courtesy John C. Reimer

The unique house plan with attached barn that the Mennonites brought with them to Canada in 1874 originated in Europe, possibly over 200 years ago.

When the Mennonites were forced out of Prussia and began immigrating to Russia in 1789, they transplanted their life style to the Ukrainian steppes and further developed the village system of which the house-barn was an integral part.

Regardless of which side of the street the house stood (though in some villages, such as Steinbach they were built on only one side) the front of the house practically always faced either to the south or to the east and all the front doors in a village also faced the same direction.

Approaching the house from the street along the driveway or path, a person would arrive at the front of the house and as he would enter, come into the spacious hall or area called the **Vorderhaus** (front of the house). This area would have four doors including the entrance.

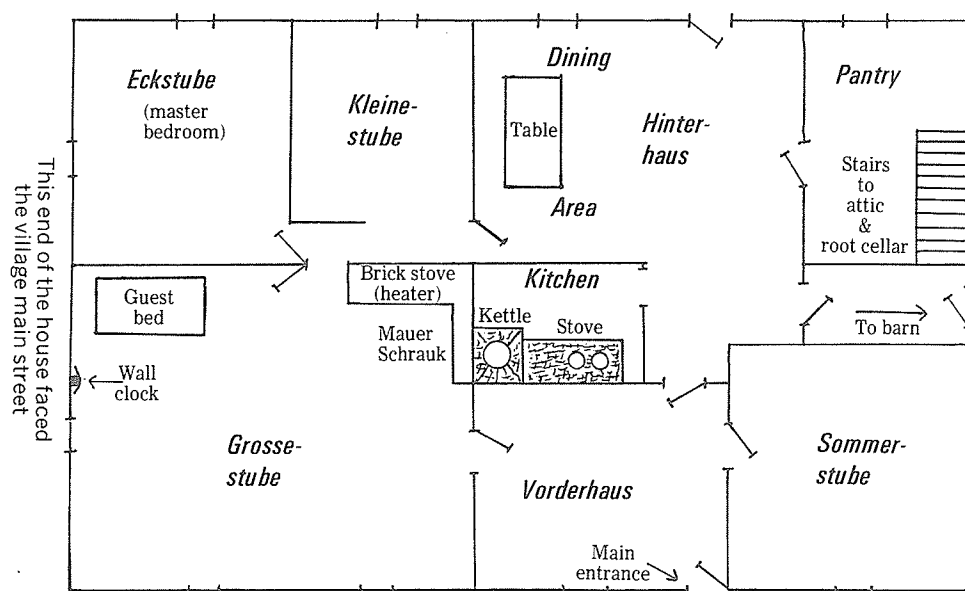
Upon entering, the door towards the street would lead to the **Grossestube** (large room) which was the living room and faced the village main street. In this room, next to the huge **Ziegelofen** (brick oven) there was a built-in cabinet of wood about three feet wide and as tall as the ceiling. This was called a **Mauerschrank** (cupboard) and consisted of a chest of drawers or wooden doors in the lower half and shelves and glass doors in the upper half.

The door at the opposite side of the **Vorderhaus** led into the **Sommerstube** (summer room) which was the boys' bedroom.

The fourth door in the entrance area or **Vorderhaus** was opposite a person coming into the building and led to the **Hinterhaus** or back of the house which served as the dining room.



A back view of the Mennonite house-barn at the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach. In Russia this unique building style which originated in the Netherlands provided protection against bandits who stole livestock. In Manitoba it provided protection against a new enemy — the cold. The architecture, simple, solid and functional, reflects the character of the early pioneers.



Mennonite House Plan (courtesy John C. Reimer)

As you'd enter this area you would pass the kitchen which was a comparatively small room in the centre of the house with a large window on two sides to let in light.

The kitchen was neat and compact and con-

tained the kitchen stove and large kettle for heating water. Above the ceiling of the kitchen, in the attic, was the large tapering chimney which served a double purpose as a smokehouse and safety feature to keep the sparks from fly-

ing out too quickly and igniting the thatched roof.

The chimney was about five feet square at the bottom and access to it for cleaning or placing meat was gained through a metal door in the attic.

Brick heater very important

An item of great importance in the home was the large brick heater in the centre of the building next to the kitchen and extending into the living room. Though used primarily for heating the house, it had a return-flue and a space on top of the fire box which could be used for cooking. The fire box itself was regularly used for baking in winter time when the brick heater was in use.

Because of the heater's size and construction, it usually kept the house warm continuously if heated up only twice a day, morning and evening.

The heater was fired from the kitchen and worked equally well with a variety of fuel. In

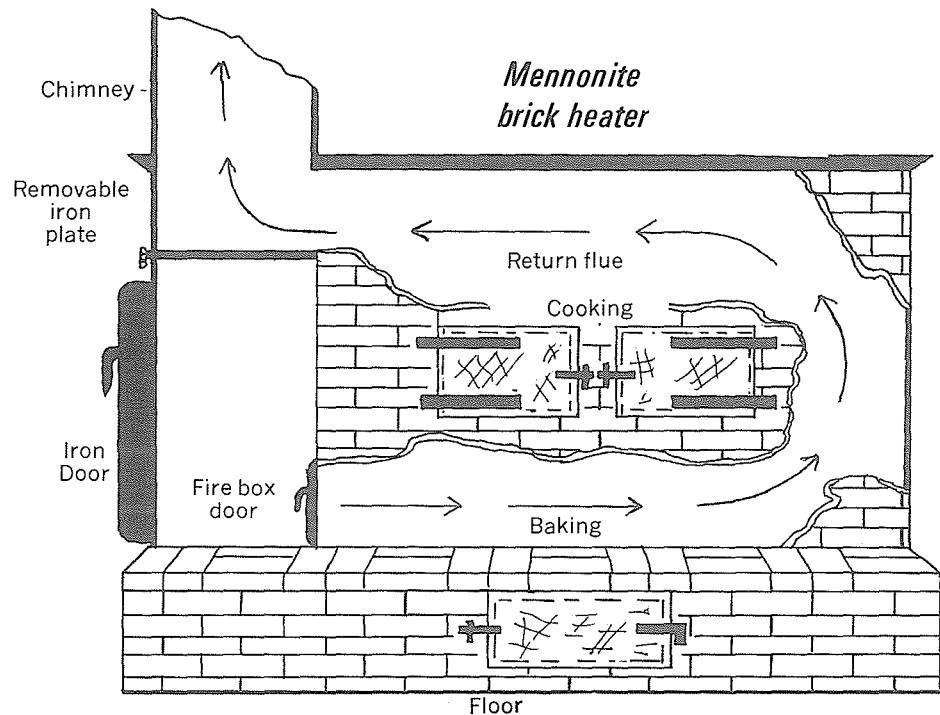
Steinbach and the East Reserve there was no shortage of wood for fuel but in the West Reserve manure was used.

To prepare this, moist manure and straw were spread on the ground to a depth of about one foot. Horses were then walked over this until it was fairly compact. When partly dry, after a few days, it was cut into squares with a spade and piled in such a way that air could get at it and the drying process be completed. Fuel made in this manner was odorless and provided slow but adequate heat.

Next to the dining room, going towards the barn, was a long narrow room which was the pantry. In here, under the stairs going to the attic, were also the steps down into the small basement or root cellar.

Between the pantry and the boys' bedroom would be the passage or hallway leading to the barn. This corridor had a door at each end to keep odors from the barn out of the house. A flight of stairs also led from the corridor to the attic where the grain was stored.

Next to the dining room, going away from the barn area and towards the street was, first of all, the *Kleine Stube* (small room) which was the girls' bedroom and then the master



bedroom (*Eckstube*, translated meaning corner room) which was entered from the living room.

There were, naturally, some variations in the use of the rooms to suit the individual but as a whole this house plan was very closely adhered to even if in some of the smaller houses some walls were omitted in order to combine rooms. The living room would always be at the front of the house nearest to the street and the kitchen at the other end.

Another standard feature of the Mennonite house was that there would be four windows of equal size on each side and two at the end.

The barn was attached

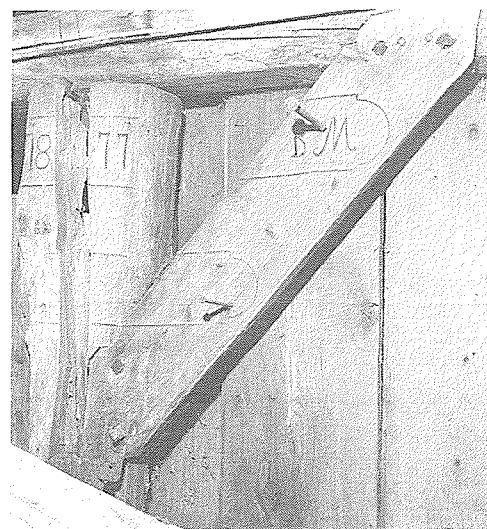
The barn on a Mennonite house-barn was always attached to the end away from the street with the front on the same side as the house. As a rule the barn would be a total of two feet wider than the house, extending one foot past the house on each side. The walls of the barn and the ridge of the roof were also about two feet higher and the roof of the barn had much the same slant as that of the house.

The barn, together with the hay mow section at the far end, was much longer than the house and all the way along the back side would be a narrow lean-to with the edge of the roof about the height of a door. Also traditional was the row of small windows running along the length



This Mennonite house-barn was built in 1877 in what was then the newly-established Mennonite village of Eigenhof or Eigengrund. It is probably the oldest building in the R.M. of Hanover today and is being used as a granary and storage shed by the owner, David F. Doerksen on Sec. 2-7-5E.

—Derksen Printers photo



Inside the barn on Sec. 2-7-5E. The Mennonite pioneers built to last. It was customary upon completing construction of a new building for the head carpenter to chisel his initials and date of completion on a large upright beam. The initials here read "B.M." and the date is 1877. The customary huge beams and wooden pegs used in the construction of these typical Mennonite house-barns are evident here.

—Derksen Printers photo

of the front of the barn and the huge door, large enough for a hay rack to pass through.

The arrangement inside the barn varied somewhat. Generally there was an aisle in the middle that ran from the door to the house, to the door into the hay mow, with the cows on one side and the horses on the other. In cases where all the livestock and poultry were under one roof, the hens would be kept in the lean-to on the front side of the barn and the pigs in the lean-to on the back side.

3. Historical sketches of Steinbach and district pioneers

by K. J. B. Reimer
(introduction by the author)

The late K. J. B. Reimer, local historian and son of one of the early Steinbach pioneers, captured the color and hardships of the early settlers in a series of brief biographies and sketches which he wrote in 1952. A former writer for *Die (Steinbach) Post* and one of the first councillors of Steinbach, Mr. Reimer was an authority on the early history of the community.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Johann R. Reimer, he was born March 27, 1897 and attended the

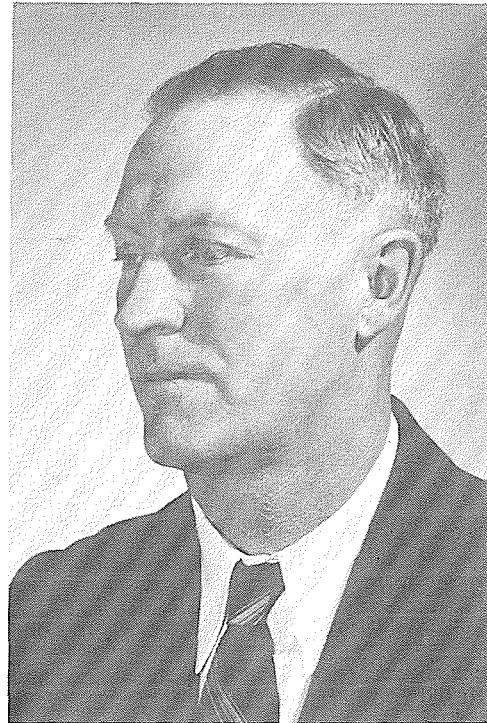
village school in Steinbach where his teacher was G. G. Kornelsen. When the first public school was opened in Steinbach in 1911, Mr. Reimer was able to get several months instruction in English before going to work. From there on he became a self-educated man, reading practically every book available in the village.

In his earlier years, he worked on his farm and in the woods during the winter. A big strong man, he was capable of doing the hard work involved with cutting and loading logs and bringing them out of the swamps.

For a good number of years he served as trustee on the Steinbach public school. When the Evangelical Mennonite Church established its first Sunday School in 1926 he served energetically as Sunday School teacher and treasurer of the church.

Mr. Reimer married the former Helena Loewen, who now survives him, on June 24, 1923. They lived on their own farm until 1946 when Mr. Reimer retired and moved to Steinbach. When the town was incorporated January 1, 1947, Mr. Reimer was elected to sit on the town's first council. His interest in local affairs was also evidenced shortly before his death in 1966 when on September 26 he was told by his doctor to go to the hospital. Mr. Reimer wished to attend the official opening of the new Civic Administration building first. He was taken to hospital following the ceremony and died there at the age of 69.

Readers should bear in mind that these sketches were written in 1952 and some of the people referred to as still living at that time have long since passed away.



K. J. B. Reimer

Rev. Jacob Barkman led the Steinbach pioneers

My mother's father, Jacob Barkman, was elected to the ministry in Russia at the age of 50 in 1873. He was the leader of the Steinbach group on their long journey to the promised land and I still have in my treasured possession the Thanksgiving sermon, dated Oct. 18, 1874, for a safe journey across the Atlantic Ocean.

But his own pilgrimage in this new and unknown country was of very short duration. The first spring of 1875 was unwilling to yield to summer and the first day of June saw a procession of ox teams wind its way slowly to Winnipeg, my grandfather with his oldest son Jacob being among the party. The provisions during the hard winter had run low and garden and grain seed was also urgently needed.

On the third day they arrived in St. Boniface and it was felt by members of the party that to save time several men should go on ahead and begin purchasing. Though the ferry was not operating due to the high waves on the spring-flooded river, a man by the name of Lindolp was handy with a small boat and my grandfather, together with his neighbor Jacob Friesen, stepped aboard. About one third way across the river the boat capsized and the passengers, burdened by their big Russian fur coats, drowned in the icy Red River.¹

My grandfather's corpse was found the same day and all that next night a lone Red River cart with a Metis driver, carrying his old flintlock rifle beside him, went back home along the lonely road to Steinbach. The young son with the dead body of his dear father at his side, broke down with anguish. My mother has often told the story of how griefstricken her mother had been when she heard and saw what had happened.

Though Rev. Barkman died before he could even see the settlers he had led from Russia firmly established at Steinbach, one of his

sons, John G. Barkman, was later to continue providing leadership for the community. John G. Barkman held the post of mayor for 25 years or more and took a big hand in the arduous task of converting the age-old method of strip-farming into quarter sections in 1910-12.

Jacob T. Barkman was a shareholder in flour mill

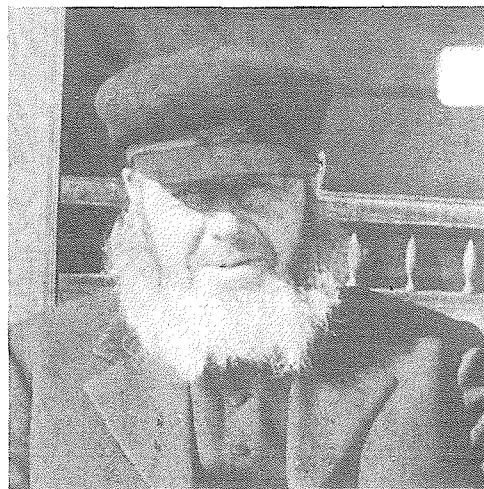
Jacob T. Barkman (1848-1935)

Jacob T. Barkman, the eldest son of Peter K. Barkman, was married to Aganetha Giesbrecht in 1869.

They emigrated to Manitoba with the Gruenfeld group about six weeks previous to the Steinbach settlers. When his parents and the rest of the family decided to locate in the Steinbach area, Jacob also left his temporary shelter in Gruenfeld to start over again in the new village of Steinbach.

He located on Lot No. 14. The residence of the late A. W. Reimer is still standing on this lot.

That first winter of 1874 he joined his father and younger brother and built a warm shelter for joint occupation. This building was two feet into the ground, 18 ft. wide and 48 ft. long. Light rails were used on the roof, closed tight with long grass and mud.



Jacob T. Barkman

¹ A slightly different account of the same incident appears in an earlier chapter in the recollections of the early days by Frank Goossen.

The front 30 feet were partitioned off for living quarters and the other 18 feet held stable room for the oxen and probably a milk cow.

Mr. Barkman was a shareholder of the first flour mill built in 1880 by his father. After a few years, he sold his interests in the mill and also his building lot in Steinbach and moved to Heuboden, a place northwest of Kleefeld. Here he farmed and also operated a small store until 1918.

When in the fall of that year many deaths occurred due to the ravaging flu, his faithful life partner also was taken from his side through death. With the death of Mrs. Barkman, the last married couple from Russia in our congregation was parted. When Mr. Barkman remarried in 1921 he moved back to the old village of Gruenfeld, near the place where he had taken up his first homestead in August, 1874. He died there in the year 1935.

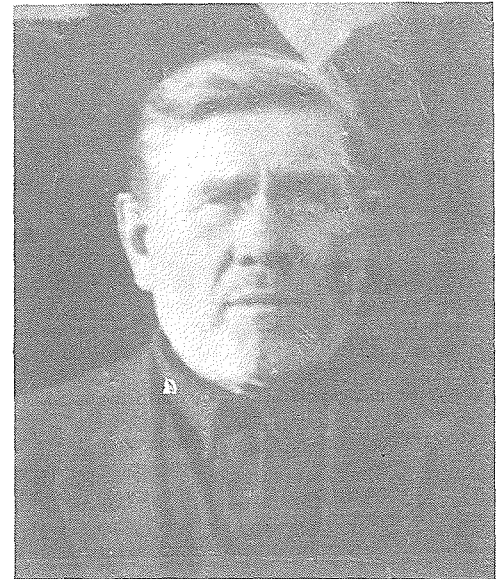
P. T. Barkman was miller, businessman

Peter T. Barkman came here from the old country as a 13-year-old boy. He helped clear a road with an axe that is today Steinbach's main street. This was in the fall of 1874. In his early youth he helped haul logs to Steinbach and in 1876, at the age of 15, he was already handling his own team to help fill a log contract that the people of the community had from Wm. Hespeler.

After the first steam-driven flour mill was built by his father in 1880, he soon became an efficient miller but after the second mill started operating in 1893, he became severely afflicted with rheumatism and left the work in the mill to begin a Massey-Harris implement business.

After the death of his brother-in-law, Jacob W. Reimer, who died of the Spanish flu in the fall of 1918, Mr. Barkman gave his time and efforts to help the new manager of K. Reimer and Sons, young J. J. Reimer, eldest son of the late manager, to safely overcome the perilous times following the first World War.

Peter T. Barkman married Katherina, the



Peter T. Barkman

daughter of Klaas Reimer, in 1883 and the couple had the privilege to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary in 1933. Although Mrs. Barkman had to go through more sickness than the average settler, she always showed much hospitality in her home to her friends as well as to strangers.

On the same day the aging parents held their golden wedding anniversary, their eldest daughter Katherina and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Ben P. Janz, celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary.

Mr. Barkman believed in a good elementary system of education for the village and for many years served on the local school board as trustee.

His daughter, Mrs. Jacob S. Rempel, once recalled that the-then-young teacher, G. G. Kornelsen was engaged by her father to teach the family the intricacies of the English language on winter evenings.

Around 1907 Mr. Barkman was successful, with the help of a few neighbors, to convince the village parents of the necessity to engage a teacher to teach English during two summer months each year.

Consequently, they hired a young Lutheran theological student every year from Winnipeg. One of these was Edward Smook. These teachers also had their home at Barkman's during their stay here.

Mr. Barkman was severely ill during the last months of his life and died in the middle of the coldest winter in later years, Feb., 1936.

Mrs. Barkman followed in death about four years later. A fitting stone marks their resting place in the family plot in our pioneer cemetery, one block from Main Street, in the centre of the town.

Most of their children are continuing and extending the business activities in our town established by their rugged forefathers.

Heinrich Brandt

Heinrich Brandt, the father of K. W. Brandt and one of the Steinbach pioneers, besides being a farmer, was a skilful carpenter. I can well remember seeing his name carved in one of the sturdy braces of my uncle's barn with the inscription, "Foreman at the building operations."

His son, Klaas, born in 1876, lived in or near Steinbach all his life.

Heinrich Fast Sr. — an original Steinbach pioneer

The Heinrich Fasts were original Steinbach settlers on Lot No. 18 and neighbors to Franz Kroekers. The following history of early times was told by their second son, Heinrich L. Fast, who arrived in Steinbach Sept. 25, 1874 with his parents. His father had brought a scythe from Russia together with other household necessities. The wooden handle for it had been selected in Gruenfeld. He cleared enough room to spread the blankets and they slept under the twinkling stars that first night. When they awoke in the morning a light hoar frost covered the blankets.

They immediately set to work to build a dug-out and joining hands with the old Franz Kroekers, built the dirt and grass hut together. Here we find an example of true neighborly friendship. The hut was built so that half of it stood on the Kroeker property and the other half on their own. They also made a little frozen hay in the coulee south of their

dwelling and even plowed about three acres in their lot for the next year's seeding.

During that first cold winter their yoke of oxen died for want of good nourishment.

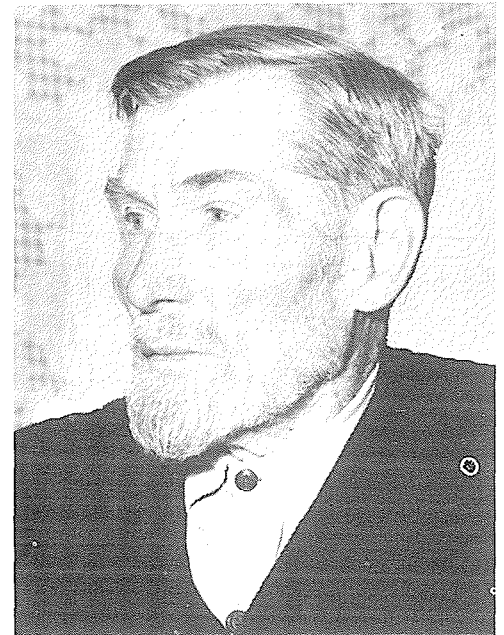
At night coyotes would parade along the village road in search of food. They probably felt quite safe among the defenceless new intruders of their domain.

The following spring, when the settlers seeded their small plots and the grain came up, countless hordes of grasshoppers invaded it and devoured it in no time.

Mr. Fast can remember the funeral of my grandfather who drowned in June, 1875. Mr. Fast and John Wiebe, a youth two years older than himself and now living in Oregon, were herding the village cattle in the vicinity of the old cemetery that day. They left the herd for a little while and joined in the burial procession.

After nine years of village life, young Henry's parents sold out and settled on the southern outskirts of Steinbach where Henry lived until he married, when he moved to the village of Gruenfeld. Here he farmed and also served as postmaster for many years. He also started a blacksmith shop which in later years was changed to a garage by his sons.

Mr. Fast was born in 1826 and died in 1890.



Heinrich L. Fast

Cornelius Fast built his home for \$3.50

Cornelius Fast was one of the original Steinbach settlers. In 1855, when he was only 15 and still living in Russia his father was the victim of a peculiar and tragic accident. It was a year after the Crimean war and Mennonite teamsters had brought an unexploded bomb home along with other souvenirs of the war. Mr. Fast was the village blacksmith and the bomb was brought to his shop to be opened.

Mr. Fast carefully opened the bomb and then took a long-handled spoon with which he was going to put glowing coals into the opening to clean out the inside. A terrific explosion took place, literally tearing his leg off. The mortally wounded man was then taken to a distant village for medical aid but by the time he arrived there he was beyond the help of a doctor.

Cornelius Fast Jr. was born in 1840 and he was already an older man with a family of seven children when he came to Canada in 1874. His eldest son Peter lives in the U.S.A. Another son, Ben and a daughter, Mrs. Jacob F. Reimer, live in Steinbach.

Like that of the other settlers, Mr. Fast's first home was partially built into the ground. He related later that the cash outlay for windows, doors, rails, etc. to build the home was \$3.50.

Mr. Fast was one of the few immigrants who learned to speak English in the old country. This proved to be a great help during the first fall when Mr. Fast was able to speak to John Peterson, the friend of the settlement, who was only too glad to give advice so that the newcomers could prepare themselves for the coming winter.

The Fast family stayed in Steinbach only two years, then moved to the West Reserve where Mr. Fast became a school teacher and worked as a carpenter in his spare time. In 1906 he moved back to Steinbach where he took up carpenter work on a small scale.

The writer remembers that he got his first lessons in carpentry from Mr. Fast when the latter built the home for the writer's father.

The writer also remembers how patiently the carpenter tried to teach him, and with what intense interest he listened to stories of the olden days as told by Mr. Fast.

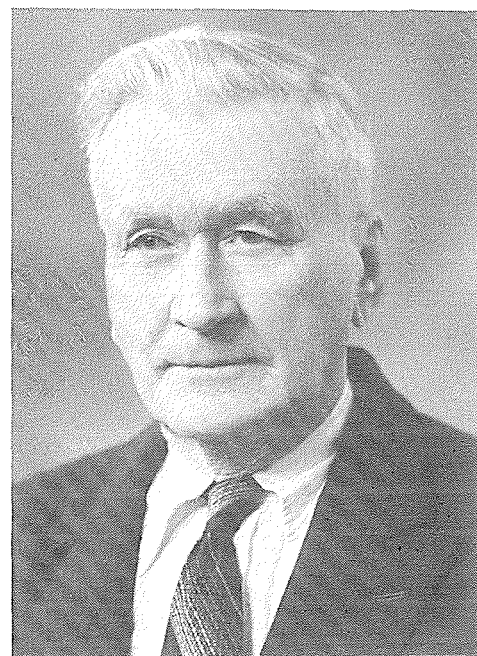
Cornelius Fast died in 1927 in his 82nd year.

Isaac F. Friesen once herded cows in Winnipeg

Isaac F. Friesen was born in South Russia in December, 1873 and emigrated to Manitoba with his parents, Heinrich Friesens, in the fall of 1874. There is reason to believe that the family remained in Fort Garry for a certain length of time as his older brother in later years related how they herded the town milk cows on vacant lots and occasionally even on the main street of Winnipeg that first fall.

Probably theirs was the first Mennonite family to have lived in what is now the city of Winnipeg.

After some six months of sojourn in Manitoba, part of which was probably in Rosenort, the Friesen family was dissatisfied with the



Isaac F. Friesen
1873-1952

climate and departed for Jansen, Nebraska. Here young Isaac grew to manhood. A few years after his marriage he, with some of his relatives and friends, moved to Texas, not far from the city of Houston. They stayed here for a period of only two years.

In 1900 they came back to Nebraska. Some of his older brothers had in the meantime moved to Steinbach, Manitoba and in the fall of 1903, one really cold day, the Isaac Friesen family stepped off the train at the old C.N.R. station on Water Street, Winnipeg.

Although Isaac Friesen could not remember anything of his first visit there, the far northern plains must have been to his liking as is shown by the fact that the family stayed in Canada.

When they settled down in Steinbach, Mr Friesen was fortunate to get the mail delivery from Giroux to Steinbach in company with his older brother George, who had come here a year previous. The remuneration for that mail delivery was \$1.19 per trip, rain or shine. There was no mail service on the road except for the stop at Alex McCaskill, a country post office where Blumenort and Blumenhof received their mail for many years.

As a sideline they started the first meat market in the village and made farm deliveries of best quality beef steaks at five cents per pound. In later years Mr. Friesen recalled how some farmers thought the price of beef was really a bit high.

In 1905 the Friesens heeded the call to the west for free homesteads and with many others, located a home near Lanigan, Saskatchewan.

In the first years there, they met many hardships and the wheat had to be hauled a distance of 30 miles to Humboldt.

After most of their friends left the settlement, the Friesen family decided to move back to Steinbach in 1917 where Mr. Friesen's oldest two sons became well known as lumber dealers under the name of Steinbach Lumber Yards.

John S. Friesen located on Lot 17

John S. Friesen was married in Russia about six months before he emigrated to Manitoba in 1874. Because he was a son-in-law of Peter K. Barkman it was only natural to make the trip across the ocean in company with that family. Mr. Friesen referred to that trip as a belated honeymoon voyage, never forgotten during his lifetime.

Part of an old diary gives glimpses of adventure during the long trip. On one occasion he and his young wife went sightseeing in the city of Odessa on a prolonged stop. He had all his savings with him, some 25 rubles, and after walking some time two ruffians tried to stop them. Here he paid tribute to his resolute young wife, who, seeing him in danger, knocked one of the would-be robbers flat. His accomplice got cold feet and ran away.

In Liverpool, England, they embarked on a big boat that took them across the Atlantic to Quebec. When they at last came to this part of the country they looked for suitable land to farm. John Peterson informed them that some arable land south of his homestead was still vacant and the new settlers found it satisfactory and lost no time to lay out the village plan of Steinbach.

They agreed to draw numbers for their place of abode. There also was the privilege to change places so that relatives could build alongside each other.

The Friesens located on Lot No. 17. They built their first permanent house in 1880. It is the oldest dwelling in the village, still being occupied by Isaac Plett Jr. His grandmother, widow Is. Plett, bought the place in the early 1880's from its former owner. When John Friesen sold his land holdings in Steinbach, he moved to Hochstadt where at that time a new settlement was being started by fellow pioneers.

After part of their family had grown up they gave up farming and lived for some time in

Winnipeg but in later years they moved back to Steinbach where they had started farming in the seventies and endured many hardships with their fellow pioneers.

Mr. Friesen was born in 1853 and passed away in 1937.

Klaas B. Friesen 1838-1922

Klaas B. Friesen was already married when he came to Canada in the fall of 1874 with his wife and two boys, Cornelius and Klaas. Father Friesen settled on the north end of the village on Lot No. 1 and lived there until about 1909 when he sold his farming equipment and retired from active work. On that land, up until 1960, stood the second oldest house in town, owned and occupied for many years by the well-known ex-teacher and able Mennonite historian, G. G. Kornelsen.

It was built in the year 1889 and was still in fairly good condition when destroyed. It was of great historical value, as it clearly showed the typical early Mennonite building design.

John B. Toews, who died at age 102 in 1967, helped build that combination house-barn. Mr. Toews could remember that Mr. Friesen and his neighbor Mr. Cornelius Fast built and used a sawing rig that depended entirely on human power.

A hole about six feet deep was dug and a contraption built to roll the log into position. A platform was erected on top of the log for the other man to stand on and the tedious sawing job got underway.

If anybody today undertook to square one log, let's say 12 feet long and kept track of time, it would be easy to figure how few board feet could be handled that way in one day.

The old building referred to was sold by Mr. K. Friesen in 1909 to Gerhard W. Reimer, who only lived in it for about a year, then sold it to G. G. Kornelsen, at that time teacher in the Steinbach public school. Mr. Kornelsen was

one of the last pioneer's sons who was able to acquire a homestead on one of the original eight townships set aside for settlement to Mennonites in 1873. As the teaching profession interfered with farming he sold the homestead and lived in the village on No. 1 lot beginning in 1910.

Klaas R. Friesen was an inventor

A. S. Friesen established a machine shop in Steinbach in 1892 and his right hand man here was his son, Klaas R. Friesen. This machine shop stayed in the family. After the death of K. R. Friesen, it was completely taken over by his sons, Henry and Barney.

Mr. Friesen's greatest achievement came to light in his later years on the farm after all his sons had grown up and established their own homes.

It was after the turn of the century that K. R. Friesen started to build a gasoline tractor. It was a crude machine by today's standards, but could be started and made to go sometimes — if the operator had enough patience. In one instance, after extensive starting operations, the tractor finally got going but instead of running smoothly it somehow became engaged in reverse and before Mr. Friesen could jump onto the platform, backed over a fence and other obstructions in the way, causing a lot of damage. Even the loud "Whoa's" shouted by Mr. Friesen in his excitement would not stop it.

With the help of his son-in-law, Klaas W. Brandt, who at that time owned the neighboring farm, he also built and operated a threshing machine that could be called the fore-runner of today's combine. It was a small replica of the big machines of that day. Four horses were hitched in front and a stop was made at each stook. The straw was scattered on the field and plowed into the ground or burned with the stubble. A gas engine was mounted on the machine to furnish the threshing power.

A patent was secured on this machine but somehow it never came to mass production and was the only machine built of that type.

Wilhelm Giesbrecht first settled at Kleefeld

Wilhelm Giesbrecht was born in the Molotschna Colony in the village of Pragenau, South Russia. At the age of 12 he lost his father Gerhard Giesbrecht. As his widowed mother was very poor he had to find work with the village farmers. At the age of 20 he had the chance to learn the shoe-making trade, which was of great value afterwards in the pioneering days in Manitoba. He married Elizabeth Harms in 1873 but she died the following year leaving him with a baby boy.

As a widower, he took part in the great trek to Canada in 1874. On arrival at the banks of the Red River at Niverville, his little son became sick. His condition grew worse from day to day and he finally died. The lad was buried at the emigrants' camp before they left for their destination.

Mr. Giesbrecht decided to settle in Gruenfeld village where he found a new life-mate that first winter by the name of Katherine Friesen. As the village was moved to higher grounds the next summer he and his wife packed their belongings and moved a few miles south-east onto his own homestead, calling the new village Blumstein.

He farmed there until 1878 when he moved to the village of Steinbach. Here he bought original lot No. 3. His family at that time consisted of his wife and two boys, Gerhard and Wilhelm. In an interview with this writer Wilhelm, the oldest, recalled many of his experiences. At an early age he had hired out to neighbor John Peterson during the threshing season as driver for the horse-driven threshing unit. By that time Peterson had learned more about Plattdeutsch than the Steinbach youngsters had learned of the English language.

At the age of 20, A. L. Friesen taught him the trade of lumber-sawing. For the next 30 winters Wilhelm Giesbrecht excelled in efficient sawing and there were not many sawyers in the district that could beat his record in a season. In the summer he helped the Steinbach house movers and never missed a season with the time-honored custom threshing gang.

Gerhard, the other brother, helped A. S. Friesen to build his first strawstacker in 1899, at that time working in his machine shop. Following his marriage he went into partnership with his brother-in-law, C. T. Loewen, custom threshing in the summer and sawing in the winter. In 1905 he was a victim to the call "go west, young man, go west" and left with his young family and other descendants of the first pioneers for the golden west, the last frontier of the American continent.

They took a homestead some 30 miles from Humboldt, Sask. and when the settlement there broke up, he returned with his growing family in 1910 and bought the old Anderson farm in Clearsprings.

The boys' father, Wilhelm Giesbrecht, was fortunate to have learned the shoemaking trade in the old country. As a result he was able to provide his growing family and neighbors with footwear at a small cost. He was expert in manufacturing "half shoes" for older people. It is hard to describe this model shoe to the younger generation. In the dialect we use, they are called "Schlorren" and will be well remembered by people over 50 years of age. (A type of sandal made of a one-piece wooden sole and heel with leather or cloth covering little more than the toes. The thing was kept on the foot by curling the toes down somewhat.)

Wilhelm Giesbrecht Sr. enjoyed the confidence of his brethren and neighbors and was elected to the ministry in 1884. He faithfully served in that capacity for 33 years. Ten children grew up in his home.

He made several evangelistic tours in the U.S.A. and was editor of the church paper, *Messenger of the Truth* from 1911 until his death in 1917.

Peter H. Guenther was cheese maker, telephone operator

Peter H. Guenther came to Steinbach at the age of 18 years. He was one of the first to start taking photographs in the village. He also became a good cheesemaker.

In the fall of 1908 the first long distance telephone line was installed and Peter Guenther became the first operator. He also took over the



Peter H. Guenther

post office in 1908 and served as postmaster until 1917.

After his life partner died he remarried and moved to Dallas, Oregon where he became a fruit farmer. On occasions when he came back to visit his children and old friends, he marvelled at the change that had taken place in the old village.

After the death of his second wife he made plans to move here and spend his remaining years with his children. These plans never materialized, however, as he took fatally sick in 1949 and died peacefully at the age of 83 years. He was laid to rest in the cemetery at Dallas, Oregon.

His son, Peter S. Guenther, teacher in Steinbach, relates the story of a moose hunt as told to him by his father. When his father was still a young man, he with a companion, each on horseback, were roaming the plains around Steinbach. All at once they spied a moose and followed it at full speed. When the animal jumped a fence, it got entangled in the wires and fell to the ground where Mr. Guenther ended its life with his pocket knife.

Franz Kroeker 1827-1905

Franz Kroeker was one of the two settlers that owned two quarter sections in the Steinbach plan and this entitled him to two 10-acre lots in the village.

Kroeker's and their neighbors Fast's, each had only three children but the small dugout which they shared was still very crowded that first winter.

Mr. Kroeker was able to buy some green summer hay from John Mack, the first settler in the Clearsprings district. (Mr. Mack lived on the quarter that Alex McCaskill bought from him in 1879. He had a German speaking wife and is probably the settler referred to by the Russian delegates of 1873.) By feeding this hay to his oxen he was able to get them through the severe winter. A friendship developed between the two settlers as a result of this and Heinrich Fast, the neighbor boy, remembers that John Mack's sometimes visited the Kroeker's, Mrs. Mack acting as interpreter.

After the first winter the Kroeker family had the dugout to themselves and they converted the available space for Sunday church services. After building a spacious residence, the church services were continued in the new residence for many years.

Mr. Kroeker's grandson, Cornelius T. Kroeker, remembered that his grandfather owned a fair-sized flock of sheep in his farming days. He had hired the two Giesbrecht boys, Jacob and Dietrich, from the north end of the village, as herders. One day they herded the flock on the boundary line of south Steinbach. Four-year-old Corny was with them on the occasion. Old Johann Klassen was the owner of the other land to the south and had put up a neat rail fence along the road allowance. As the boys had much leisure time, they started to test the strength of the old rails. It was great fun to see them break so easily. The pleasure came to an abrupt end when Mr. Klassen appeared on the scene with a formidable stick to mete out justice. Only by humbly begging forgiveness did they escape heavy punishment.

The father of C. T. Kroeker became well known by the second generation of the village as he became a big scale farmer. In 1900 he bought the aforementioned farm owned by Mr. Klassen, thus providing work for his growing family. He became a custom thresher-man in his early farming days. As early as 1894 he and another Steinbach farmer, A. P. Reimer, owned a steamthreshing outfit.

The same year in spring, an incident occurred which left a deep impression on C. T. Kroeker, then a lad of six years. It was in the latter part of March that two men left for their home in La Broquerie. When only one of the two men arrived home, a diligent search was started. Both French and Mennonite search parties spent days looking for the missing man but for weeks no clue of his whereabouts could be found. A new snowfall further hindered the search.

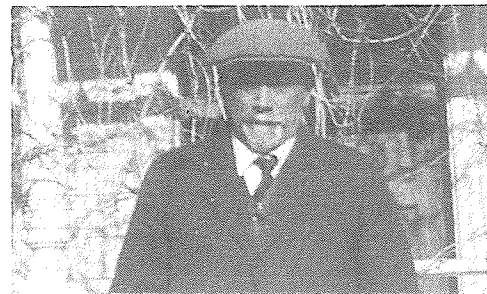
The frantic relatives offered a considerable sum of money to anyone finding the missing man. One Sunday morning, about four weeks later, when some of the snow had disappeared, young Cornelius with his elder and younger sisters set out on a walk along the winding creek which, incidentally, was also the main road east. Suddenly one of the children spied something white. Walking boldly nearer they found it to be the missing man. With great haste they ran back home to spread the news about the gruesome discovery.

His father went to Peter T. Barkman and together they went to La Broquerie to report the case. After the arrival of the dead man's friends, a small hut was built over the body and a team was sent to Winnipeg to notify the police. After due investigation the authorities released the corpse for burial.

Cornelius Kroeker Sr. lived as a village farmer all his life. He made many friends during all those years and is still remembered for his fair dealings.

The oldest son, Cornelius, who helped to compile these notes, later lived on the same lot owned by father and grandfather. He operated a flourishing oil business under the name of C. T. Kroeker & Sons.

Cornelius B. Loewen
did custom threshing,
operated sawmill



C. B. Loewen

The Steinbach area was richly blessed in the early days with different types of rugged and energetic pioneers and pioneer sons, a great asset to the early development of this province.

Cornelius B. Loewen, the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Loewen, was 11 years old when he came to Manitoba in 1874 with his parents. They settled in the village of Gruenfeld, now Kleefeld. Two years later his mother died.

In April, 1877 his father married my grandmother who had lost her husband, Rev. Jacob Barkman, two years previously by drowning in the Red River near Winnipeg.

He was 13 years old at that time and lived in or near Steinbach most of his life span. As other youths of his age, he made frequent trips to the woods about eight miles south of Steinbach for firewood. On one of these occasions he and a companion, A. W. Reimer, three years older than himself, barely escaped freezing to death.

Government records show that winters in those early years were colder than they are today and it can safely be assumed that the clothing of the poor settlers was much inferior to today's woodsmen's outfits.

Young Cornelius was married at the age of 19 years to Anna, daughter of Peter Toews, a sister to P. R. Toews. He started house moving and custom threshing on a big scale, as very few farmers owned threshing outfits at that time. He also operated a sawmill in winter and for several years, beginning about 1894, was partner with A. W. Reimer.

At that time the name "Pine Hill" was familiar to young and old. A site where hardly 60 years ago hundreds of farmers and laborers were active for many winter seasons is forgotten today and overgrown by young evergreens. In the early 1950's a party consisting of the three sons of C. B. Loewen — Cornelius, Isaac, and Abram — in company with K. R. Toews and G. G. Kornelsen, made a determined effort to relocate the old sawmill site at Pine Hill. It took great effort to find any traces. This gives readers an idea of how hard it is to write the history of the pioneers when there are very few experiences recorded by our forefathers.

In 1899 Mr. Loewen bought the farm located one mile south of Steinbach where John D. Penner has his poultry enterprise.

Mrs. Loewen, the mother of five successful Steinbach businessmen, died in 1902. After his second marriage to the widow of John Reimer of Blumenort, Mr. Loewen sold his lumber interests to his oldest son, Cornelius T. Loewen and his son-in-law, Gerhard F. Giesbrecht and concentrated on farming.

He saw great farming possibilities in the new district of Prairie Rose which was opened up around 1920 but when the high post-war prices slumped he suffered great material losses. Eventually he sold his home and farm and started a small store in the town of Morris. After selling out there, they moved back to Steinbach. In the summer of 1928 Mr. and Mrs. Loewen left for Meade, Kansas by car to help with the wheat harvest there.

Mr. Loewen took seriously ill and died a week later, far from home but tenderly cared for by his wife and friends. His body was returned in a coffin to the old village where he was laid to rest with many of his friends and companions of pioneer days. Mr. Loewen is remembered as an upright Christian in the community, ever willing to lend a helping hand to his neighbors and friends in distress. He was an expert butcher and the writer still marvels at the speed with which he did the work, whether it was slaughtering of hogs or killing a steer for the winter's supply of meat.

Most of the dates and happenings recorded here have been compiled by C. B. Loewen's son-in-law, George F. Giesbrecht, R.R. 1, Giroux.

Joseph Lambert was an excellent woodsman

Joseph Lambert of La Broquerie was also connected with the early Steinbach settlement in that he used to work at the A. W. Reimer sawmill in his early days.

Born in 1876 in Quebec, he came west with his parents in 1878 and settled near the new Catholic mission post which was named La Broquerie by Archbishop Tache of St. Boniface in memory of his beloved mother.

Mr. Lambert could recall the building of the first church in 1881. In 1886 the Winnipeg firm of Hatcheson got a contract to build a road between La Broquerie and Steinbach. Before that time the La Broquerie settlers had to go far north, passing through Blumenhof to reach Steinbach during the summer months.

As most of his fellow settlers, Joe was an expert woodsman in his young days. At the age of 18 he started to work at Pinehill at A. W. Reimer's sawmill. When spring rolled around, he and a partner had cut and skidded 50,000 feet of lumber at \$2.50 per thousand.

In 1900 Mr. Lambert followed Reimer's to Sandilands. About four miles south of where the village of Sandilands now stands a huge project was underway. Thousands of cords of tamarac were to be cut, brought down to a nearby creek and then floated down the Rat River into the Red and from there to Winnipeg. Unfortunately these fine plans could not be carried out as the spring water ran too fast. As a result, the cordwood had to be taken to the new railroad that now spanned the Southeast and shipped by rail. The name of the camp was Klondyke.

Mr. Lambert, who passed away Nov. 27, 1956 at the age of 80, enjoyed good health up to his last years and emphasized frequently that he would never forget the good relationships he enjoyed with his employers many years previously.

**Cornelius Plett —
minister, farmer
1846-1935**

Cornelius Plett settled in the new village of Blumenhof in 1875 and was elected to the ministry in 1891. He farmed in the village until 1908 when he retired and moved to a farm one mile south of Steinbach where Adolf Freund is living at present. At that time it was owned by Rev. Plett's children, Bernhard Doerksen's.

In the years 1915 and 1916 several families here sold their farms and moved to western Kansas. Rev. C. Plett also moved to Kansas at that time to organize the congregation in a new settlement. By 1926 his eyesight began to fail rapidly. At the age of 88 years he peacefully passed away in the new settlement.

Most of the families that moved to Kansas from here at that time came back to Manitoba. Mr. Plett's years were 1846-1935.

**Johann S. Rempel held
many important positions**

Mr. Johann S. Rempel was a teacher, blacksmith, farmer, postmaster, secretary-treasurer for the R.M. of Hanover and songleader in the Chortitz Mennonite Church.

Mr. Rempel was 21 years of age when he emigrated from the Bergthal Colony in South Russia with his parents to Canada. The group he travelled with spent the first winter in Ontario with a Mennonite family named Brubacher who had settled near Waterloo at the beginning of the century. Here young Johann eagerly learned the English language and that ability, coupled with a good elementary school education in the old country, was of the greatest of help in his manifold civilian duties which he was later called on to perform.

In the spring of 1875 the whole group went on a lake boat to Duluth, Minn. but before they reached this sea port, winter weather had set in and the ship was ice-bound. This trip and the



Johann S. Rempel
1853-1929

hardships they endured on it was interestingly described by Mr. Rempel on the 50th jubilee celebration near Steinbach in September 1924. After being icebound for 10 days, with starvation staring them in the face, they were rescued by a change in the weather and the sending of an ice-breaker from Duluth, a distance of about 20 miles.

Mr. Rempel's parents settled near Gruenthal, Manitoba and Johann hired out as school teacher at Tanau about two miles south of Chortitz. He married Katharina Peters in 1889. In 1890 his first wife died and he married her sister, Margaretha Peters and lived in the village of Chortitz.

He took over the post office in Chortitz in 1889 which had been kept by Wilhelm Hiebert since 1884. At that time the mail was brought once weekly from Otterburne via Jolly (St. Pierre) to Steinbach. After the railroad through Giroux was completed the mail came around the other way. He operated the Steinbach post office until 1906.

His first year as secretary-treasurer of the R.M. of Hanover was in 1902. The following years are recorded in the municipal office as the years he served in this office: 1902, 1903, 1905, 1913-1916, 1919-1921.

He was punctual and correct in his bookkeeping and made many friends while he was in office. At that time, the municipal office was located in Chortitz.

Mr. Rempel was born in 1853 and passed away in 1929.

Heinrich Rempel taught school for 33 years

Heinrich Rempel was born in South Russia in the large Mennonite settlement near the Black Sea in 1855. His father died in 1871 when he was only 15 years old and although Heinrich was related to the Reimer's in Steinbach and two of his older married sisters had left in the great trek to America in 1874, he and his mother

stayed behind with about two thirds of the Mennonite population. One third, about 15,000 people, left their home to establish new homesteads in a new country and about half of that number chose Manitoba.

Heinrich Rempel married in 1874 but as he found farming in the old country difficult, he wrote his relatives across the sea and asked for a helping hand. After receiving an affirmative answer, he sold out and started on the long journey to Canada with his young family. That was in 1883. In due time he crossed the ocean and boarded the train to St. Paul. Here his money gave out and he would have been stranded without even the knowledge of the English language had he not made the acquaintance of a German Baptist pastor who arranged his further voyage to Niverville.

From there they were transported by a Mennonite farmer to Mr. Rempel's brother-in-law's place in the village of Gruenfeld. On his very first day there, he was offered the position of village teacher. He signed the contract and stayed as teacher for 13 years. As his sons began to grow up, the family moved to a farm four miles south of Steinbach which they bought from Klaas Reimer. Although they were on a farm of their own now, Mr. Rempel stayed on as teacher in the following schools: Felsenton, Greenland, Ekron and Blumenhof. Altogether, he served in this capacity for 33 seasons.

Mr. Rempel was a gifted poet and is remembered by the older generation as a well-liked correspondent for several German weeklies. He was a charter member of the Bruderthaler Mennonite church since its inception in the late 1890's. He also helped organize the first church Sunday School in the East Reserve. Two of his sons are still serving as ministers in Mennonite churches.

Heinrich Rempel's sold their farm in 1911 and moved into Steinbach where they stayed until they passed away in peace. Mr. Rempel is still remembered by many of the former pupils and fellow citizens for his friendly and understanding manner.



Heinrich Rempel
1885-1926

**Peter W. Reimer —
a man of unusual ability**



Peter W. Reimer

Farmer, cheesemaker, sawmill owner, postmaster, livery barn owner, Justice of the Peace, veterinary, druggist.

Peter W. Reimer was seven years old when he arrived in Steinbach in 1874. Because he was a boy of unusual ability he soon was of great help to his father, Klaas Reimer, in his different enterprises in the new village.

At the age of 21 years he married a young German immigrant girl, Gottliebe Schrein, from Poland, who had arrived some time ago on a prepaid ticket from his father.

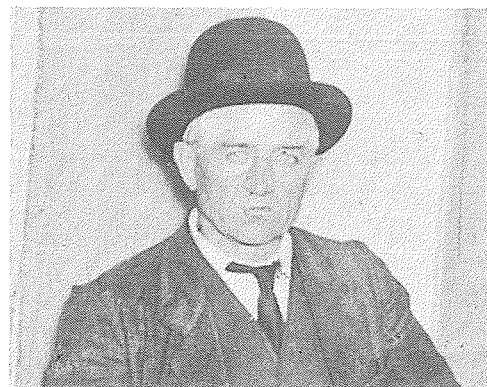
As Mr. Reimer had been trained in cheese-making, he moved to Kleefeld and changed the creamery built by Isaac B. Plett into a cheese factory in 1889. He also operated the post office. From Kleefeld they moved to Winnipeg and here, on Elgin Avenue, the Reimers established a livery barn and cordwood business. After five years they moved to Sandilands, where Mr. Reimer ran a lumber and cordwood business on a big scale. Here he also received his commission as Justice of the Peace.

From Sandilands they moved to Isle des

Chenes, onto a big grain and hog farm.

The next move was to Steinbach where Mr. Reimer acted as veterinarian and druggist. He also owned a modern general store on a valuable corner lot in the centre of the village. From here they moved again to Winnipeg, where Mr. Reimer for years operated a small corner store. After his life partner died in 1941, Mr. Reimer came back to the village that he helped to build 70 years ago. Here he told the writer of this sketch that he never, in all his moving and travelling, left the boundary of this province after he came from the old country. Mr. Reimer died in 1946.

**Abraham W. Reimer came to
Canada at the age of 14**



Abraham W. Reimer

A. W. Reimer, born in 1860, was the eldest son of Klaas Reimer. He was 14 years of age when he helped to build that first shelter here in 1874. After his retirement from active work, he dictated some experiences of early frontier life in Steinbach to one of his many English friends. He reminisced about that first autumn, how they put up the tent and plowed fireguards as they were told by John Peterson of Clearspring.

The first settlers in Steinbach were so poor, Mr. Reimer recalled, that only 15 of them were able to buy a yoke of oxen each. As the hay which they made in October was badly frozen, some of those oxen died from starvation that first winter.

Some of the dugouts used as homes the first

winter had been made too deep and were flooded in the spring. Consequently they had to be abandoned.

Mr Reimer also mentioned the grasshoppers the following year. When these pests left after July 1 their flight was so dense that they obscured the sun for two days. 1877-78-79 and 1880 were all very wet years. The low spots were full of water and it seemed as if the whole country was a swamp. There were no roads, railways or drainage canals to take the surplus water off the flat country in those days.

Despite these hardships some crops were raised which yielded extraordinary returns. The straw was five feet high, with very long, heavy heads of grain. The settlers were greatly encouraged by seeing such marvellous stands of grain.

Hay too, was a very heavy crop. A man could cut three loads a day with a scythe but it was difficult to cure and haul. All grain was cut with a cradle and a man reaping would sink into the soft ground as deep as it was plowed.

The shafting for A. S. Friesen's first windmill had to be hauled from Winnipeg. It consisted of two pieces of oak. One piece was 32 feet long by 12 inches square and the other 18 feet long by 12 inches square. Seventeen-year-old Abram, with his younger brother Klaas, undertook to freight them to Steinbach. They were on the road for a week and it rained almost continuously. They camped under the wagon on a canvas sheet and sometimes found themselves lying in the water in the morning. Through the night the oxen would slush round the wagon bellowing because of the hordes of mosquitoes.

For part of the journey the timbers were actually floating in the water they were being dragged through.

Around this time Abram Reimer became the son-in-law of old Peter Barkman and joined as partner in the first steam flour mill. After the mill burned down he left the partnership and went into the lumber business, blazing the trail to Pinehill, some 25 miles southeast of Steinbach in what is now known as the Bedford district. This was in 1892. The business partners were A. S. Friesen and Sons.

It was an historic event when they started that fall, going by Dawson Trail to avoid the open swamps. From the very start they befriended two or three Indian families that lived there in the desolate wilderness. One of the Indians, by

the name of Morrow and a good hunter, became a valuable guide for the white men in locating the best timber stands.

Mr. Reimer also told about how he once had camped in 30-below weather outside by a big woodfire, sleeping soundly between the two Indian guides. In the morning twilight these children of nature got up without any sound, stretched their arms to get the blood circulating again and nonchalantly started the glowing embers to a blaze again.

K. R. Toews, a young chap at that time, remembered one of the hunting trips in which the Indians had experienced tough luck. On a cold morning they'd hitched their cayuse to a toboggan and started out looking for moose. After a couple of miles they tied the horse to a tree and made a long detour to follow some tracks. In the afternoon twilight they finally saw a moving object and the first bullet from the old muzzle loader was a sure hit, as usual. But how astonished they were when they came nearer and found that instead of a moose they had killed their own horse. They looked pretty sheepish when they came back to camp, pulling the empty sleigh behind them.

One winter some years later, a Frenchman by the name of Michaud straggled into camp. He was not very communicative but being a good millwright, was tolerated. It seemed that he was always on the alert, especially in the evening. He was also an expert marksman. One evening toward spring three burly RCMP officers suddenly entered the camp and when they saw the stranger, arrested him as a dangerous criminal wanted in the east for robbery.

About 1894 C. B. Loewen, father to C. T. Loewen, became a partner with Mr. Reimer. A few winters later the sawmill was put up in Steinbach and a lumberyard business started at the same place where Steinbach Lumber Yard is located today.

About 1908 Mr. Reimer sold his holdings in Steinbach and moved to Giroux where he built a traveller's home which operated successfully for years. He died in 1930. Three of his sons became successful local businessmen.

Klaas W. Reimer built the first cheese factory

K. W. Reimer (1861-1944)

Klaas W. Reimer was 13 years old when he helped his father cut a trail in the dense poplar bush which today is the main street of Steinbach.

In later years he very vividly portrayed the building of that first shelter, how he and his older brother went with their father to the spruce wood on the farm later owned by John C. Reimer and carried the heavy logs out of the woods to the wagon. The roof of the dwelling was thatched with long hay of a type that was especially adapted for the purpose. This hay was hollow inside and had no particular food value. It was found only in certain places. The one nearest to the village was on the next creek to the west. The early settlers named it "Dack Ritch" meaning Roof Creek, a name that is still familiar with the older generation.

He also mentioned their bill of fare that first winter. It consisted of potatoes cooked in salt water, black bread, and barley coffee.



Mr. K. W. Reimer



This was one of two medals won by Klaas W. Reimer. This gold medal, now in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. J. A. Regier of Steinbach, was the highest award in cheese making and presented at an international exposition in the U.S.A. in 1901. Mr. Reimer also won a first prize for cheese or butter at the Toronto Exhibition in 1897.

Even a prairie fire had to be fought that first fall and only by great efforts were they able to save their crude shelters from complete destruction.

Mr. Reimer probably was the first Menno-nite to take a course in butter and cheesemaking. In 1889 he built and operated the first cheese factory in Steinbach in combination with a general store at the north end of the village. He won a first prize for cheese or butter-making at the Toronto Exhibition in 1897 and a gold medal at the Pan American exhibition in 1901.

The Steinbach cheese factory was located near where his daughter and her husband later operated a cornerstore known until recently as Betty's Grocery.

Mr. Reimer died in 1944 at the age of 83.

Johann R. Reimer
farmer, gardener

My father, Johann R. Reimer, was born in 1848 in South Russia. His father, Abram Reimer, emigrated as a small child from the later free state of Danzig to Russia in the year 1804. My grandparents made the trek to America in their old age, in company with their children's families. They never possessed much material wealth but grandfather gained outstanding knowledge by reading the books available at that time.

In his old age he made trinkets of wood for his grandchildren, some of which are still kept in the family as priceless heirlooms. My grandmother did a lot of custom tailoring and that heritage was found to run in the female line of her offspring. Both grandfather and grandmother died in Blumenort.

My father had to leave home when still quite young to earn his board and upkeep and as the tillable land in their colony was scarce and too expensive for a poor beginner, he was eager to make a new start in America. He remained a farmer all his life but was interested in market gardening from the very start of his pioneer days.

I remember that our father once told us about his first trip in an automobile on the streets of Winnipeg. His old friend Mr. Ashdown, who had come to Winnipeg in 1873 and established a tinsmithing business, invited him for a ride on his new auto-buggy. It may have been in 1905.

Father became the mayor of the village for the first time in about 1880. The minute book from that year is still in our possession. He held that position in later years as well but the exact years cannot be verified.

That he believed in advertising is proved by a business card in our possession, already yellow with age. It is probably the first printed advertising in Steinbach.

We lived as farmers in the village on the lot where Loewen Garage is now situated until 1916. Then the rapid expansion of the old village to a modern town forced the last farmers to move out on their own farms.

Father died on March 24, 1918 and was buried in the old cemetery where most of his fellow settlers have also found a resting place.

Jacob T. Regehr did much
for the dairy industry

Jacob T. Regehr is recognized as a prominent figure in promoting and establishing the dairy industry in the East Reserve. He came to Manitoba with the early settlers at the age of 14 and grew to manhood in the small village of Rosenfeld. When he came of age, he homesteaded the quarter section in Hochstadt now owned by Frank L. Isaac. He was married in 1884 and lived on his homestead until his death in 1916 at the age of 55 years.

The late Miss E. Cora Hind, a noted authority on agriculture in Western Canada, writes in an article **Fifty years of Dairying in Manitoba**: "Another of the advocates of dairying of those days (around the 1890's) was J. T. Regehr of Hochstadt and Steinbach. A Menonite in religion, and speaking habitually at home the Dutch of his native ancestry from the Province of Friesland in Holland, he seldom made speeches but he was a definite force among his own people east of the Red River and did very much to stimulate interest in cheese making. It was through him that the Department of Agriculture in the early days of the Premiership of Hon. T. Greenway, organized and carried out a very successful series of dairy meetings in the eastern section of the province."

From the year 1897 he was for eight years elected to the honoured position as a director to the Manitoba Dairy Association.

He introduced and was the first agent in the east reserve of the De Laval cream separator, probably in 1895. The writer of this article remembers that the first cream separator in our household was a DeLaval from Regehr's of Hochstadt. That was about 1904. Mr. Regehr also operated a small country store and sold Cockshutt farm implements for many years. He was the first postmaster for Hochstadt.

The late Mr. Regehr started to increase the milk production in his own herd by introducing the Holstein breed of dairy cattle into

the district. His son, Jacob E. Regehr, started out as cheesemaker. Later, he operated a successful garage and implement business under the name of J. E. Regehr and Sons in Steinbach.

Jacob T. Regehr was born in 1861 and died in 1916.

Jacob E. Schellenberg could tame any horse



Jacob E. Schellenberg
1870-1943

Jacob E. Schellenberg was a four-year-old boy when the great trek to Manitoba in 1874 took place. He grew up in the village of Rosenfeld. As his parents were very poor, young Jacob had to earn his own bread at a very early age and his schooling was only limited.

When he came of age, he settled in Steinbach. For some years he helped Cornelius Ratzlaff in his blacksmith shop but later turned his attention to well drilling. Some of the wells he drilled in the mid-1890's still flow although the generation that lived here at the time is gone.

One of these wells stands out in particular. After 55 years of continuous service the well

drilled near the coulee on the Klaas Reimer estate still flows, producing a good stream of water year in and year out.

Jacob Schellenberg married Helena Reimer in the fall of 1897. The following spring they moved to a farm one and a half miles east of Steinbach on the La Broquerie road. With a pair of well-trained oxen Mr. Schellenberg started to clear his land and together with his wife cleared off over 200 loads of stones that first summer.

Mr. Schellenberg acquired a great knowledge of horses and it can be safely stated that he was the most successful horse trader in the East Reserve. Innumerable yarns have been spun around how he could tame the most vicious, bucking, biting and kicking animal.

In 1906 they sold their farm and took up a homestead at Humboldt, Saskatchewan. When they arrived there in early May a terrific snowstorm overtook them and it was only by sheer luck that they weathered it without any serious losses in livestock. That first year they broke and seeded 25 acres and reaped a good crop of oats.

In 1912 they sold out and moved back to Manitoba, first settling in the Kleefeld district and later moving back to the La Broquerie district.

Mr. Schellenberg was an ardent hunter and did not miss many hunting seasons in his life. He usually came home with a fat buck.

In the early part of their married life Mr. and Mrs. Schellenberg had the misfortune to lose two orphans they adopted. One was fatally injured when kicked by a bronco; the other died of a heart attack.

Mr. Schellenberg was probably the first mail carrier from Steinbach to Grunthal, via Chortitz, Kleefeld and Hochstadt. This service was begun around 1902.

In the fall of 1943 he had the misfortune to break a leg in a bad fall and after a week of severe pain, passed away.

Peter W. Toews could remember Lord Dufferin

Another young pioneer boy was Peter W. Toews, later well known in Steinbach as "Smith" Toews.

He related in his life story how he remembered the year 1873 when his uncle Cornelius Toews was sent as a delegate to America to find a new home. On his uncle's return, Peter was taken by his father to Nicopol, the seaport, and onto the ship to welcome back his uncle. When his uncle greeted them his first question was about how things were at home. Young Peter had to tell him that his daughter Katherine had died while he was away. He also remembered vividly his uncle's sorrow at not being able to find all of his loved ones alive after his many months absence.

After coming to Canada the Toewses settled in the village of Gruenfeld and being very poor, had to use oxen for their farming and transportation for the next 10 years. It was very hard for Peter, who had a special liking for horses from his early childhood, to see his neighbors pass them on horse-drawn carriages on a Sunday morning.

He never forgot that memorable day in August 1877 when Lord Dufferin visited the village of Gruenfeld the day after the official welcome. When Lord Dufferin desired to visit the home of their neighbor, Peter Dueck the school teacher, 12-year-old Peter was allowed to hold the Lord's finely matched team. It is possible that Lord Dufferin remembered Peter, as he had taken part the day before in singing with the Gruenfeld school for the honored guests.

After his marriage, he started blacksmithing on a small scale. He bought an old hammer for 25 cents, a broken anvil for 50 cents and was ready for business.

In his 25th year he came to Steinbach and hired out to H. W. Reimer as blacksmith. About a year later James Steele, Sr. came to the shop to have some work done. Mr. Toews took heart and asked the kind-looking stranger to lend him 50 dollars to start his own blacksmith shop. Mr. Steele lent him the money

without a note and without any interest for a year. From that time on Mr. Toews' assets began to accumulate. He was fortunate to be able to hire good help in the person of Heinrich Kreutzer, a new arrival from Austria.

Mr. Toews sold out in 1907 and moved to Swalwell, Alberta, where he pioneered again and became a well-to-do farmer and rancher. His sons all took to farming in that district although his three sons, Peter, John, and Henry did not reach the age of their father and were laid to rest in the prime of their lives.

Mr. Toews' years were 1865-1935.

John B. Toews, 102, was the last of the '74 immigrants



John B. Toews
1865-1967

John B. Toews, born in 1865, came to Blumentort in 1874 as a nine-year-old boy. He had an excellent memory of the old times and often described the trips to the woods in the winter of '74 and '75. Several surrounding villages got their supply of timber from Section 32-6-6, south of the Piney Highway. Some tamarac or spruce logs measured up to 12 inches.

I saw these stumps 50 years later, when our family owned a part of the spruce forest in later years. These trees produced logs up to

30 feet in length and could be seen at the G. G. Kornelsen residence in the 1950's.

In the later 1880's and 1890's the settlers hauled logs from five miles south of Steinbach where most likely most of the old Clearsprings log houses originated. Mr. Toews could not remember having seen any horse teams during the first few winters.

As the settlers had no sawmills the first winter, they improvised by using a home-made hand saw-rig. The rig was built like this: a rig six feet high was erected and the logs that were to be sawn were then rolled on this structure. Then, using a six foot saw, two men could average about 100 feet of lumber a day.

The first small sawmill was built by Abram S. Friesen of Steinbach in 1876. The driving power was furnished by two horses. I recall having seen it at work at the old Johann Janzen place in Blumenhof. Boards like siding and flooring were purchased in Winnipeg but the frame logs were smoothed with a broad axe which had a 10 inch cutting edge.

The first cedar shingles were cut by hand by the early English settlers in the district. The Mennonite farmers bought many shingles from old Tom Rankin who was an expert cutter, while his wife, in true pioneer fashion helped him by sorting and making them up in bundles.

Mr. Toews also recalled that some of the pioneers went on foot to Fort Garry, where they bought their team of oxen, loaded their provisions and tools that they had purchased and thus came back home with their new possessions.

As a young man, John B. Toews started out as a teacher, with the salary of \$12.50 per month. After six winters of teaching, one season in Blumenort, one in Neuanlage (now Twin Creek) and three seasons in the new settlement of Greenland, he became a full-time farmer. In 1901 he moved to Kansas, where he farmed until 1918 when he returned to Manitoba with his family, taking up a farm near Ste. Anne village until his retirement.

Mr. Toews was elected a deacon in Kansas in 1916.

Editor's note: Mr. Toews died July 13, 1967 at the age of 102. He had been the oldest living survivor of the first Russian Mennonite immigrant group ever to come to Canada, in 1874. He had been a lively boy of nine at that time and remembered vividly up to his last years the details of the ocean voyage and the long overland trip to the heart of the continent.

Mr. Toews marked his centennial birthday March 30, 1965. At that time he numbered his living descendants at about 300.

4. The steam and windmills of the East Reserve

by Peter A. Braun

(translated from German from the book: 75 Gedenkfeier der Mennonitischer Einwanderung.)

As there was a fairly substantial crop in 1876, Johann Braun and Peter Wiens built a small steam-powered mill approximately 3½ miles northwest of the present Chortitz post office.

This was of great significance to the settlers because now they no longer had to get flour from Winnipeg.

Three small windmills brought from the Red River settlement at Winnipeg were also brought to the Reserve and assembled at Gruenfeld, Tannenau and Eigenhof. Peter K. Barkman was building foreman for the latter two windmills.

In the same year Wm. Hespeler, at that time German Consul in Winnipeg, made a contract with Steinbach residents in which they were to bring 825 building logs, 12 inches or thicker and 20 to 30 feet long, to Steinbach. The logs were to be cut out of the bush 12 miles east and two miles south of the village. For this, Mr. Hespeler would pay them \$700. Though this would mean hard work, it was good money.

The wood was brought to a place across a street from Abr. S. Friesen. Some of these logs were later used by Abr. S. Friesen as cornerposts for Steinbach's first Holland-type windmill.

Peter K. Barkman, who had been a miller and millwright in the old country, did the work for a wage of 50 cents a day.

Work was begun in May, 1877. In August the mill was completed to the point where boards could be made and in December,

chop and flour could be milled at up to 40 bushels per hour.

The wood for the large shaft and spindle for the wheels and rollers on which the roof was to rest so as to turn the arms of the windmill into the wind, had to be turned by lathe in Winnipeg. The iron work was done by Klass Reimer, an experienced blacksmith from Russia.

The mill cost A. S. Friesen \$2,000. Once, during a strong wind, the brake hadn't been properly tightened and things went wild. One wooden wheel 12 ft. in diameter broke and one of the pieces landed ¼ mile away.

But there were also the less serious sides of the business. One day a local resident came and asked Mr. Friesen whether he would do some milling for him. "Yes", replied Mr. Friesen, "but not today because there is no wind."

"Oh, do you require wind for milling?" asked the ignorant fellow. It had never occurred to him that wind was required for a windmill.

Here's how the mill operated:

The grain was put in sacks and winched up to the top (fourth) storey. There it was poured into a container and then allowed to go to the third storey where two large milling stones five feet in diameter and lying horizontally, ground the grain. This chop then passed down into the second storey where it was again bagged and then passed outside. In a good wind, up to 100 bags of chop could be milled in one hour.

The tall bush in the area greatly hindered the operation of the windmill and so Mr. Friesen added steam equipment which cost him \$1,300. With this addition, the mill did not have to be dependent on the wind and consequently people came from far and



The Steinbach windmill, built in 1877 by A. S. Friesen. It was constructed on Mr. Friesen's yard, near to where Friesen Machine Works Ltd. now stands. The mill was dismantled and taken on sleighs to Rosenort in 1879. This fan tail mill was not of Netherlands design. Research has indicated that the design probably originated in Germany or England. This photograph was taken while the mill was already in Rosenort.

wide to have their logs sawn or grain milled. The work could be done quickly and efficiently.

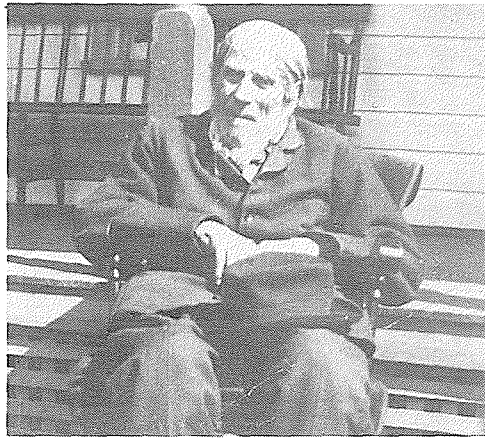
It was as early as March 3, 1879, though, that the windmill was dismantled and taken on sleighs to Rosenort near Morris. Here Peter K. Barkman was again made building supervisor. He was assisted by Isaac R. Loewen.

The mill had been purchased by Is. Loewen, Jac. Toews and Frank Froese for \$1,550.

It was 30 feet in diameter in the bottom and 20 feet in diameter at the top. The wings were approximately 23 feet long.

Peter W. Toews was the first miller at Rosenort. In the 1890's he became the sole owner and often left his field work when there was a good wind, to attend to the mill.

In 1904 Mr. Toews sold the mill to Gerh. Rempel. Business decreased however, as



Peter K. Barkman, who was the millwright in charge of building the Steinbach as well as several other windmills in the Reserve around 1877. Mr. Barkman was also associated with the steam-operated mill that was set up in Steinbach in 1880.

many farmers built their own grist mills powered by gasoline motors.

After the death of Gerh. Rempel, the mill became the property of Is. H. Friesen who sold it in 1920 to Corn. Eidse and Jac. H. Friesen for \$100.

After a period of 43 years the windmill was torn down by the last owners. One of the oak steps still serves in the home formerly owned by J. H. Friesen, McTavish, Man.

In 1880 Peter K. Barkman went to Ontario and purchased a used steam-operated mill for \$2,500. The four owners of this mill began operation in August of the same year. This mill served the East Reserve for 12 years before it was destroyed by fire in August, 1892.

The owners were not so easily discouraged however, and immediately travelled to Toronto to buy the necessary machinery



This is Steinbach's second mill (third, if you count the windmill as the first.) It was built in 1892 after the first mill, of which no photograph exists, burned down. Owners were Abram A. Reimer Sr., Peter T. Barkman, Peter K. Barkman and A. A. Reimer. Mr. Reimer, now 88 years of age and in the Rest Haven, Steinbach, worked in this mill for 18 years. It was sold to P. T. Barkman in 1918 and burned in October, 1920.

—photo courtesy A. A. Reimer



The P. T. Barkman mill, built in 1921, burned in May, 1931. Owners were K. R. Barkman, Ben P. Janz and J. S. Rempel.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther

for a 75-barrel rolling mill. Exactly one year later this was in full operation.

After seven years' successful operation this mill also was claimed by fire but the mill owners were not yet defeated and construction of a new mill got underway immediately. This mill was sold by its owners in 1918 for \$12,550.

The mill remained till 1931 when it fell fate to fire just as its predecessors. The new owners, like the old, had courage to begin over again and immediately began work on a 100-barrel rolling mill. They were not let down in their expectations. They had a series of profitable years and the building complex was added to many times.

The first mill was driven by wind, the next three by steam, and the last, which remained till the era of electricity, used, and is still using, that source of power.

At Grunthal

A steam powered grist mill was set up in Grunthal by the firm of Braun and Krahn in the 1890's. In 1911 a modern 50-barrel mill was built by a 12-man syndicate. This mill was powered by gasoline motor in the first year but when this proved to be impractical a steam engine was installed.

This mill was only in operation till 1919 when the milling forms were sold to a Carman factory. In 1928, the large remaining building was bought by City Dairy, Winnipeg and remodelled into a creamery. In 1949 the building was torn down. (See "The Grunthal Factories" in chapter on agriculture).

5. Local government and the R.M. of Hanover

The problem of separating the church from secular administration and power is one that has plagued the Mennonites throughout most, if not all their history.

In theory the Mennonite church and administration in the settlements were separated but in reality the church was the most powerful force within the community.

When the Mennonites moved to Russia from Danzig in 1788, the land on which the Mennonites were allowed to settle remained the property of the state and could be used by everyone on a share basis. If any one individual left the settlement, he could not retain hold on any property.

The Russian government allowed the Mennonite settlements to operate pretty well on their own and this was one of the points they had stressed upon migration.

By around 1800, the kind of self government that was later transferred to the East Reserve was clearly evident in the Mennonite settlements of Russia.

A **Schulz** or mayor was elected by the landowners of the village and he, often with the help of church elders, managed administrative affairs. When matters of importance to the whole village had to be dealt with, a meeting (**Schultebott**) was called. A yet higher level meeting, concerning matters of a whole colony or settlement, was attended by the **Schulz** from each village.

When the first groups of the more conservative Mennonites left Russia for Manitoba, one of the reasons, though not the main one, was that the church was losing its identity by involving itself too much in non-spiritual matters.

The Mennonite villages in the East Reserve were tightly knit and because the people had actually brought their whole way of life with them from Russia, they were also remarkably self-sufficient.

There were three elected officers for every village: the **Schulz** or mayor, the **Hirtenschulze**, or man in charge of livestock and pastures, and the **Brandschulze** or fire chief who was in charge of fire fighting and fire prevention.

These three elected officials would meet with the **Wirte**, or owners of homesteads, at a meeting called by the **Schulz** whenever the need arose. In the first years there were many such meetings and though they were time-consuming, just as today, it appears that the **Schulzenbott** (village meeting) was more than just a business meeting and allowed the men of the community to get together for conversation as well as business.

The local government of the area or reserve level was called the **Gebietsamt**. It was responsible for things like roads, bridges and taxation. The man in charge here was the **Oberschulz** and in the East Reserve the first man to fill this position was Jacob Peters of Vollwerk, near Steinbach, who had held the same position in Russia.

For taxation purposes, the **Schulz** of every village would receive a tax notice stating how much money was required from his village.

The task of the **Schulz** then, was to divide the taxes among the different landowners at a general meeting.

Considering the taxes being paid today, the sums required in those days were very small, even though there was labor involved aside from the direct taxation. According to old records and receipts, the entire village of Steinbach had to pay the following amounts for taxes: 1884 - \$138.91; 1885 - \$98.59; 1892 - \$132.46; 1894 - \$357.03.

The reason the taxes were low was that there were only a handful of officials who received set wages. In the first years, for example, the mayor of Steinbach was paid only \$11 per year and the **Hirtenschulz** and **Brantschulze** were paid \$5.

These amounts grew much larger over the years, of course and it must be remembered that the salaries of the public employees such as teachers and herdsmen ran as high as \$65 each year, not including special benefits.

The building and maintenance of roads and ditches, the cutting of weeds on public lands and the upkeep of the graveyard were carried out by unpaid statute labor. Every family was credited in the account books with a certain amount of money for services rendered and at the end of the year the total amount credited to each family was divided by the number of families in the village. Those who had worked less than the average had to pay the difference in money which was distributed among those who had done more than their share.

Though the regular affairs of the village were taken care of quite well with this system, there were several differences between the way local government was carried out in Russia and in the Manitoba Mennonite Reserves.

In Russia, the authority of the **Schulz** and **Oberschulz** was backed up by Russian authorities. In Manitoba, the government could not recognize decisions made by these representatives and this is where the church played its part, using its power to preserve the status quo.

It would, of course, have been unthinkable for the church not to play an important role in the local government. The Mennonites were in Canada, after all, primarily because of religious reasons and their leaders were motivated accordingly.

The church worked closely with the leaders that the church membership had elected at a **Bruderschaft** (male church assembly meeting). Whenever one of the members stepped out of line he was firstly encouraged by various people in the community to admit his sin or crime and then mend his ways. If the wrongdoer remained unrepentant, he was made to appear before the **Bruderschaft** where the accusa-

tions and questioning nearly always resulted in his confession and request for forgiveness.

If this did not occur, he would be excommunicated and no member of the community would have anything further to do with him.

Outside of their communities, Mennonites were strangers to the ways of the world and the knowledge that they would be lost there made them toe the line. So we see that the church was by far the most powerful force in upholding the established order of things.

It is important to note that not all Mennonite groups were equally involved in self-government at the district level. The East Reserve was settled by the Bergthal and Kleine Gemeinde people. While the Bergthal settlers had their own self-governing system, the Kleine Gemeinde group had functioned as a purely religious brotherhood in Russia. According to Dr. E. K. Francis, in his book *In Search of Utopia*, the Kleine Gemeinde people, including those at Steinbach, were satisfied with organizing homogenous village communes in Manitoba and submitted on the district level to the rule of the Bergthal group. The fact that they had no influence upon the election of **Oberschulze**, which took place in the **Bruderschaft** of a church other than their own, does not seem to have bothered them.

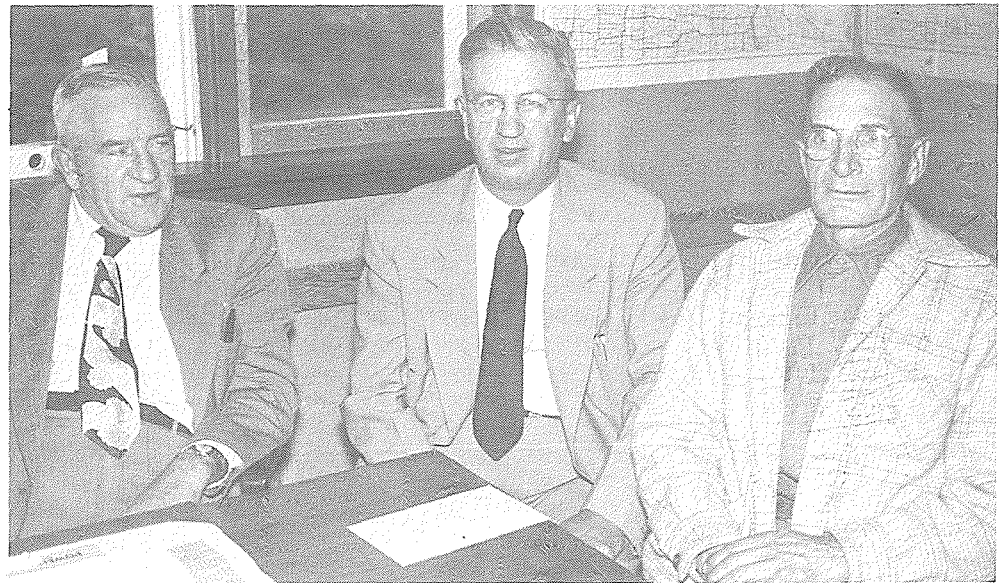
This all worked out fairly well for a few years but then pressure from the provincial government to organize into municipalities began to increase and the first municipal elections were held Dec. 27, 1882. Kleine Gemeinde residents, of course, abstained from voting.

At first the East Reserve was divided into two municipalities—Hespeler, covering townships 7-4, 7-5 and 7-6 East and Hanover, covering the remaining five townships.

This division was never enforced however and the first elected reeve, Gerhard Kliever of Niverville (then called Hespeler) looked after the entire area until the government made a change and made the two municipalities one in 1881.

The change-over to municipal government went smoothly and little actually changed except that the **Oberschulze** now had real authority and did not have to depend on the assistance of the church.

Reeves of the R.M. of Hanover



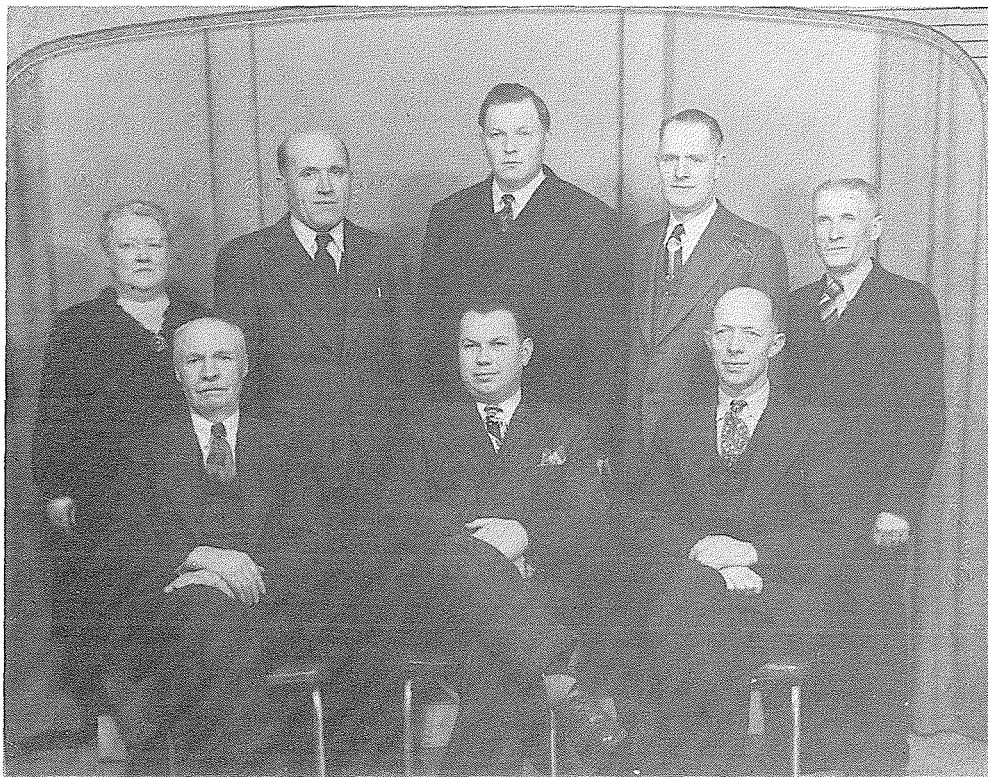
Three former reeves of the R.M. of Hanover. Left to right are Jacob R. Barkman, J. J. Reimer and Jacob H. Peters. This photograph was taken in the 1950's.

—Carillon News photo



The R.M. of Hanover council around 1922. Left to right: Adolf Mueller, reeve; John D. Goossen, secretary-treasurer; Jacob P. Funk, Ward Two; Cornelius B. Loewen, Ward Three; Wasyl Kobzar, Ward Six; John P. Friesen, Ward Four; Abram Braun, Ward Five.

—photo courtesy Jacob P. Rempel



The R.M. of Hanover council in 1948. Reeve from 1948 to 1952 inclusive (two terms) was Ted Chornoboy of Grunthal. Back row, left to right, are: Miss M. Reimer, secretary-treasurer, Abr. F. Wiebe, H. W. Schellenberg, K. R. Barkman, J. A. Ulas. Front row: M. Wachtendorf, Reeve Chornoboy and P. H. Janzen.

The first municipal elections in what is now the RM of Hanover were held Dec. 27, 1882. Elected reeve was Gerhard Kliever of Niverville. Six councillors were elected as well but the names of only two, Heinrich Goertzen, Chortitz and Peter Neufeld, Steinbach can be determined. Secretary-treasurer was Cornelius Epp.

This first council took office for the year 1884. Elections were held every year.

Gerhard Kliever served only one year as reeve and then Peter Toews of Bergthal served from 1885 to 1894.

Jacob Peters of Vollwerk, son of **Oberschulz** Jacob Peters, held the position of reeve in 1895 and 1896. It is not known who was reeve in 1897. In 1898, 1899 and 1900 it was Peter Toews again and in 1901, 1902 and 1903 it was Gerhard Schroeder.

Johan Braun of Grunthal was elected in 1904 and except for the years 1905, 1906 and 1907

when Gerhard Schroeder was in the chair and the years 1910, 1911 and 1912 when it is uncertain who was reeve, he served for seven years, until the end of 1916.

In 1917 and 1918 Jacob B. Peters, a grandson of **Oberschulz** Jacob Peters, was reeve and Johan Braun again served from 1919 to 1921.

In 1922 Hochstadt postmaster Adolf Mueller became reeve and held that position till 1930 when Jacob J. Reimer of Steinbach gained the post for 1930 and 1931.

1928 was probably the year that marked a change in municipal politics. For many years prior to 1928 there were no elections for reeve, the position being filled by acclamation. Then, around 1927-28 there was considerable opposition to incumbent reeve Mueller and in the fall, 1928 elections (for the 1929 term reeve) Steinbach lawyer and businessman N.S. Campbell let his name stand.

Forty percent of the voters turned out and

overwhelmingly endorsed Mueller 489 votes to Campbell's 183.

This election made the people a little more interested in municipal politics and in fall 1929 there were elections again. This time J.J. Reimer constituted the opposition and won election by 21 votes, 338-317.

In fall, 1930 Mueller challenged incumbent Reimer and this time won decisively, 387 votes to 221.

In the 1931 municipal elections (for 1932) Mueller challenged Reimer and ousted him with a 53 vote edge. He kept his seat for the next term as well, defeating challenger J. R. Barkman by 31 votes.

On Feb. 6, 1933 Adolf Mueller resigned. The

council had re-engaged John D. Goossen as secretary treasurer and it appears that the secretary-treasurer and reeve were not compatible.

A new election was held Feb. 27, 1933 and Jacob H. Peters, whose father Jacob B. Peters had been reeve in 1917 and 1918 and whose great grandfather Jacob Peters had been the first **Oberschulz**, was elected over N. S. Campbell with a 62-vote majority.

In the fall of 1933 Peters again defeated Campbell. This was the year reeves began serving two-year terms and Peters' term ended in 1935. He defeated both Campbell and Mueller for the 1936-37 term and was elected by acclamation for the 1938 term. He remain-



The small building in the centre is the second R.M. of Hanover municipal office at Chortitz. In the background is the church and private school. The municipal barn, where councillors left their horses, is at right. This picture was taken in 1920 and the sleighs indicate that a council meeting must have been in progress. The Model T. touring car probably belonged to secretary-treasurer John D. Goossen.

The first municipal office building was sold in the early 1900's to John P. Rempel who used it as a residence. After the Hanover council changed their meeting place from Chortitz to Steinbach, the office at Chortitz (in picture above) was sold to National Trust in 1927 and moved to SW ¼-3-7-5 where it was converted into a residence and sold to Wm. Reimer.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel



John Harms, reeve of the R.M. of Hanover for eight years, first received the gavel of office from John Schellenberg, secretary-treasurer of the municipality, in January, 1960. He held this position until the end of 1967 when he stepped down.

—Carillon News photo

ed in office for another three terms till he resigned at the end of 1945. Jacob R. Barkman then took the post by acclamation for 1946-47.

Barkman was defeated in the fall '47 election by Ted Chornoboy, a Grunthal garage owner who as a Ukrainian became the second non-Mennonite (first was Adolf Mueller) to head the municipal council.

Chornoboy served two terms and then, in the fall of 1951, chose not to seek re-election. J. R. Barkman consequently became reeve by acclamation and held this position until the end of 1956 when he retired from public office and devoted full time to his real estate business.

John D. Broesky, who had served on council for Ward 4 five years, became reeve by acclamation and served three years, till the end of 1959, when he resigned due to increased business pressures.

When Broesky had become reeve, John Harms had won Broesky's seat on council, defeating William Yarema. Now, with three years experience on council, he was prepared to let his name stand for reeve. Nomination day came on Oct. 13, 1959 and there were no other takers; Harms was in by acclamation.

After six years as reeve, in 1965, Reeve Harms announced that he would not seek re-nomination because his farm and family in the Bristol district needed more attention.

This announcement resulted in well-known Kleefeld farmer Art Topnik stating he would seek the office. Almost at the same moment that Mr. Topnik was announcing his decision to run, Reeve Harms announced that he had reconsidered his earlier decision and would be back running for office after all.

Reeve Harms easily defeated Topnik 818 votes to 294 and remained in office till the end of '67 when he decided to step down after

Former R.M. of Hanover reeve, Jacob H. Peters with the gold watch his great grandfather, Jacob Peters, first Oberschulz in the East Reserve received from Czar Alexander II for the non-combatant service the Bergthal Mennonites provided in the Crimean War of 1854-1855. As Oberschulz (similar to reeve) Jacob Peters was the leader of the Bergthal Colony in Russia and as such, in charge of the large Mennonite wagon trains that travelled to and from the front carrying medical supplies and wounded soldiers. There were three of these watches in all and it is believed that the other two went to two other Mennonite leaders for similar service. This watch is presently owned by the Peter W. Peters family of Vollwerk near Steinbach.

Derksen Printers photo



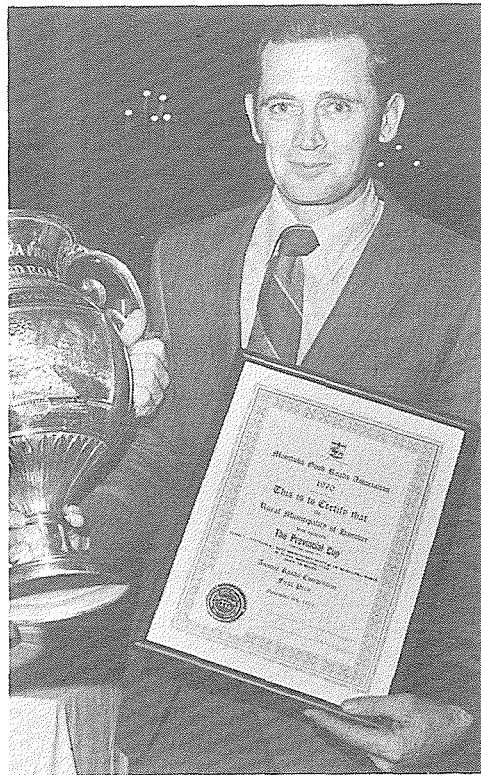
Bergthal Mennonite leader Jacob Peters' gold watch. Beautifully crafted, the engraving states that it was presented to Mr. Peters for conscientious and faithful service in the Crimean War.

—Derksen Printers photo



John Broesky, reeve of the R.M. of Hanover for three years, till the end of 1959, was also councillor for Ward 4 for five years prior to his election as reeve.

—Carillon News photo



Albert Driedger of Grunthal was elected reeve of the R.M. of Hanover in 1968. This photo was taken at the 1970 Manitoba Good Roads Association annual banquet where the R.M. of Hanover won The Provincial Cup for having the best maintained system of municipal roads.

—photo by Portugal

eight years in office as reeve and three years as councillor for Ward 4.

With the field open, a three-way contest developed with Jacob Wall, an auto wrecker and farmer of Trentham, Peter P. Toews, a Chor-titz farmer and Albert Driedger, a Grunthal dairy farmer, all seeking the position.

Though Toews was the only one of the three candidates with previous council experience (eight years) Driedger edged him out 673 votes to 610. Wall trailed with 260 votes.

In the fall of 1969 Peter P. Toews made a second bid for the office of reeve, opposing incumbent Albert Driedger. Driedger, however, had proven his capability in his short two years term in office and was given an overwhelming mandate of 841 votes to Toews' 271.

Adolf Mueller, reeve for nine years, came here penniless

Though there are colorful stories of every one of the dedicated men who served the RM of Hanover as reeve since the first settlers arrived in the East Reserve in 1874, the story of Adolf Mueller (1875-1956) who arrived here as a poor emigrant boy and through integrity and perseverance attained the high position of reeve plus many other public offices, is probably the most interesting.

Adolf Mueller was born Aug. 15, 1875 in an old German settlement near Lumberg, Galicia, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains. At the age of 14, he was given in care of a master carpenter to learn the building trade.

A few years after this, Mr. Mueller's employer received letters from a friend in America who portrayed the great opportunities there. As a



Adolf Mueller, 1875-1956, former reeve of the R.M. of Hanover.

—photo courtesy Ben Dueck

result the master carpenter decided to emigrate and offered to lend young Adolf the fare money to accompany him. The boy got his parents' permission to go but as he was nearly of military age, additional money had to be paid to officials before he could leave Austria.

The carpenter and his helper eventually arrived in Winnipeg without difficulty and here fate brought Adolf Mueller in contact with Abram Loewen, Hochstadt, who consented to pay Mueller's borrowed fare in return for a year of farm work.

Young Mueller soon took a liking to this way of life and after he finished his year in Hochstadt, went to Gretna in the West Reserve where he spent two years doing farm work.

His first arrival in Hochstadt hadn't been forgotten, however and he returned there and was befriended by the Regehr family with whom he stayed for a further two years.

After this he also worked in Winnipeg for Peter W. Reimer who ran a feed-stable business. As a salesman, he specialized in selling the up-to-50 carloads of cordwood per day which were being shipped out by Mr. Reimer's brother Abram from his lumber operation in the Sandilands Forest Reserve.

Mr. Mueller tired of city living after awhile and having been married in 1901 to Miss Emelie Ulmen, bought a farm at Hochstadt with his savings.

He soon took over the post office from Jacob Regehr and held this position for 37 years. He was also school trustee for the Hochstadt School District and served many years as secretary-treasurer.

His greatest achievement, of course, came in 1922 when he was installed as reeve of the Municipality of Hanover. While this public office hadn't involved as much in the early years, the last 25 years prior to Mr. Mueller's election had seen many changes. The Sarto and Friedensfeld districts had been settled, for one thing and drainage and school facilities had to be provided. The younger generation also clamored for better roads as by this time transportation began to change from horses to cars and trucks. Organized market road building was also started in the municipality at this time.

A hectic incident in Mr. Mueller's time as reeve occurred in the spring of 1927, the time of

the flood. Some farmers had closed the Tourond Creek west of Kleefeld and this obstruction flooded valuable farm lands and buildings.

Reeve Mueller was notified of the obstruction and he ordered the use of dynamite to clear the canal. The next night it was plugged again. This time Mr. Mueller phoned Wm. Cohoe from Clearsprings who came out in his capacity as constable and in company with Mueller was prepared for any consequences. The obstruction was again dynamited with half a case of sticks and that finally ended the controversy.

In later years Mr. Mueller retired from his many positions and activities and on March 24, 1956 passed away at the age of 80 years.

Secretary-treasurers

While the offices of reeve and councillor have always been filled by election, the position of secretary-treasurer of the municipality has been filled through appointment by council. Following is a list of secretary-treasurers and the years they served.

1884 - 1895 — Corn. Epp
 1896 — Jacob Hiebert
 1897 — unknown
 1898 - 1901 — Diedrich Dueck
 1902 and 1903 — John S. Rempel
 1904 — Jacob Hiebert
 1905 — John S. Rempel
 1906 — A. R. Friesen
 1907 and 1909 — Diedrich Dueck
 1910 - 1912 — unknown
 1913 - 1916 — John S. Rempel
 1917 - 1919 — John D. Goossen
 1920 and 1921 — John S. Rempel
 1922 - 1944 — John D. Goossen
 1944 - 1954 — Miss Mintie Reimer
 1954 - — John Schellenberg

The former secretary-treasurers of the municipality were often as colorful as the reeves and councillors and with a rapid changeover in reeves during some years, it took a steady hand to lead the affairs of the municipality.

That the secretary-treasurers of the past were also often individualistic can be seen in the fact that one of the reeves, Adolph Mueller,

resigned in 1933 because council rehired John D. Goossen as secretary-treasurer.

The most colorful of the municipality's secretary-treasurers was undoubtedly the late Miss Mintie Reimer, a public servant for Steinbach and community for 33 years.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius W. Reimer, Miss Reimer was born and raised in the town of Steinbach. She received her elementary education here from such well known citizens as G. G. Kornelson, C. F. Barkman, and Jac. G. Kornelsen. An ambitious girl, Miss Reimer, at the age of 15, left Steinbach and enrolled in a business college in Winnipeg where she acquired the fundamentals which obtained for her a lucrative position in the community and netted her highest praise from top-ranking municipal officials.

Miss Reimer first came into contact with municipal affairs when she accepted a position with John Goossen, notary public, conveyer, insurance man and municipal secretary. In his employ she became more and more acquainted with this vital mechanism of the people's affairs.

When Mr. Goossen retired as secretary-treasurer of the municipality in 1944, Miss Reimer was the logical appointee, as she had during the 23 years she was in Mr. Goossen's employ, acquired more knowledge of the RM of Hanover's affairs than anyone else in the community.

The title of secretary-treasurer was one which Miss Reimer became quite used to. Before the town of Steinbach was incorporated she acted as secretary-treasurer of the first Women's Institute group organized in Steinbach for eight years.

Although ill health forced her to retire from active municipal office, Miss Reimer accepted a position with the provincial government as assistant to the local Agricultural Representative, Dick Filteau in 1954.

"I'll help Hanover farmers raise steers," she quipped, then related an incident from Steinbach's first 4-H competition: "I placed ninth in the baking competition but won first prize for my steer."

Holding the record for the most years as secretary-treasurer of the municipality is the late John D. Goossen who passed away at the age of 66 in 1951.

Mr. Goossen served the Municipality of Han-

over as secretary-treasurer for 25 years, first serving a two-year term during 1917-1919. His second, 23-year term began in 1922 when he continued through to 1944. He was also on the school board and acted as secretary-treasurer of the school district for a number of years. From 1945 until his death he acted as representative of the municipality on the Children's Aid Society. He was also a member of the Red River Health Unit Board and for many years acted as secretary of the Portage la Prairie Mutual Fire Insurance Agent's Association. Mr. Goossen also acted as conveyer and notary from 1913 almost to the time of his death.

Born August 9, 1884 at Hochstadt, Man., the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Goossen, John D. Goossen started out in life as a school teacher. The four years prior to working for the municipality, he was a merchant, operating a store on the corner of Main and Friesen Avenue. He married Elizabeth Friesen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abram S. Friesen on Feb. 1, 1910.

The present secretary-treasurer of the RM of Hanover, John Schellenberg, commenced his duties June 1, 1954 after Miss Mintie Reimer was forced to vacate that position due to ill health.

Well known locally, Mr. Schellenberg was formerly municipal clerk for the town of Steinbach. Prior to his appointment he was employed with a firm of municipal auditors that visited every municipality in the province checking the books and procedure.

R.M. of Hanover enjoyed steady growth

Ninety years old this year (1971) the RM of Hanover, unlike most institutions or corporations that have attained that venerable age, has announced no special celebration to mark the milestone. Despite the fact that the municipality has seen tremendous progress over this time period, this is not really unusual but reflects, rather, the industrious nature of its officers and ratepayers. The Mennonites have become better known for their industrious nature than for their celebrations.

Though it is impossible to trace the continuous growth of a municipality in one chapter, it is of great interest to examine, briefly, some of the

minutes of the first years of the municipality's existence.

The early record books merely record the amount of monies received and paid out. There are no minute books as we know them today, and consequently one must judge the activity by the entries made.

The records for the first year (1881) are only partially complete but there is one interesting page that bears repeating. It lists the number of people over 18 and the number of homesteads in the municipality. The entry lists 35 villages with 378 homesteads taken up and 432 people 18 years of age and over.

For the year 1882 there is a complete financial statement: total income, \$3,032.18; total expenditures, \$1,789.63; leaving surplus of \$1,242.55. Of the money spent, \$1,198.19 was listed as "expenses for canal," which indicates that drainage was probably the biggest problem of the time.

School taxes were not listed because Menonite schools at the time were a private affair.

The statement is signed by John Funk, Peter Hamm, Heinrich Goertzen, Peter Klippenstein, Gerhard Wiebe and Peter Toews.

The municipal office at the time was located at Chortitz, which at that time boasted 18 homesteads; Steinbach had 19. The office remained at Chortitz for many years and the 1918 minutes reveal that J. S. Rempel was given the contract to paint the building and put a floor in the stable.

Without any explanation the financial statement for the year 1889 is headed, "Year End Report for the Municipalities of Hespeler and Hanover." In that year income was \$4,915.14 while expenses were \$4,597.38. Still a surplus in a year's operation, but growing smaller.

In later years, minutes begin to appear in the

records. The first minutes in English appear in the records of Feb. 2, 1914.

These are very similar to the municipal minutes one reads today. Health inspectors, bovine inoculations and school districts and their taxes seem to have been routine matters then as they are today.

The tax roll was still small however and the assessment a far cry from today's.

Vital statistics for the RM of Hanover for 1936 were: population, 5,000; births, 256.

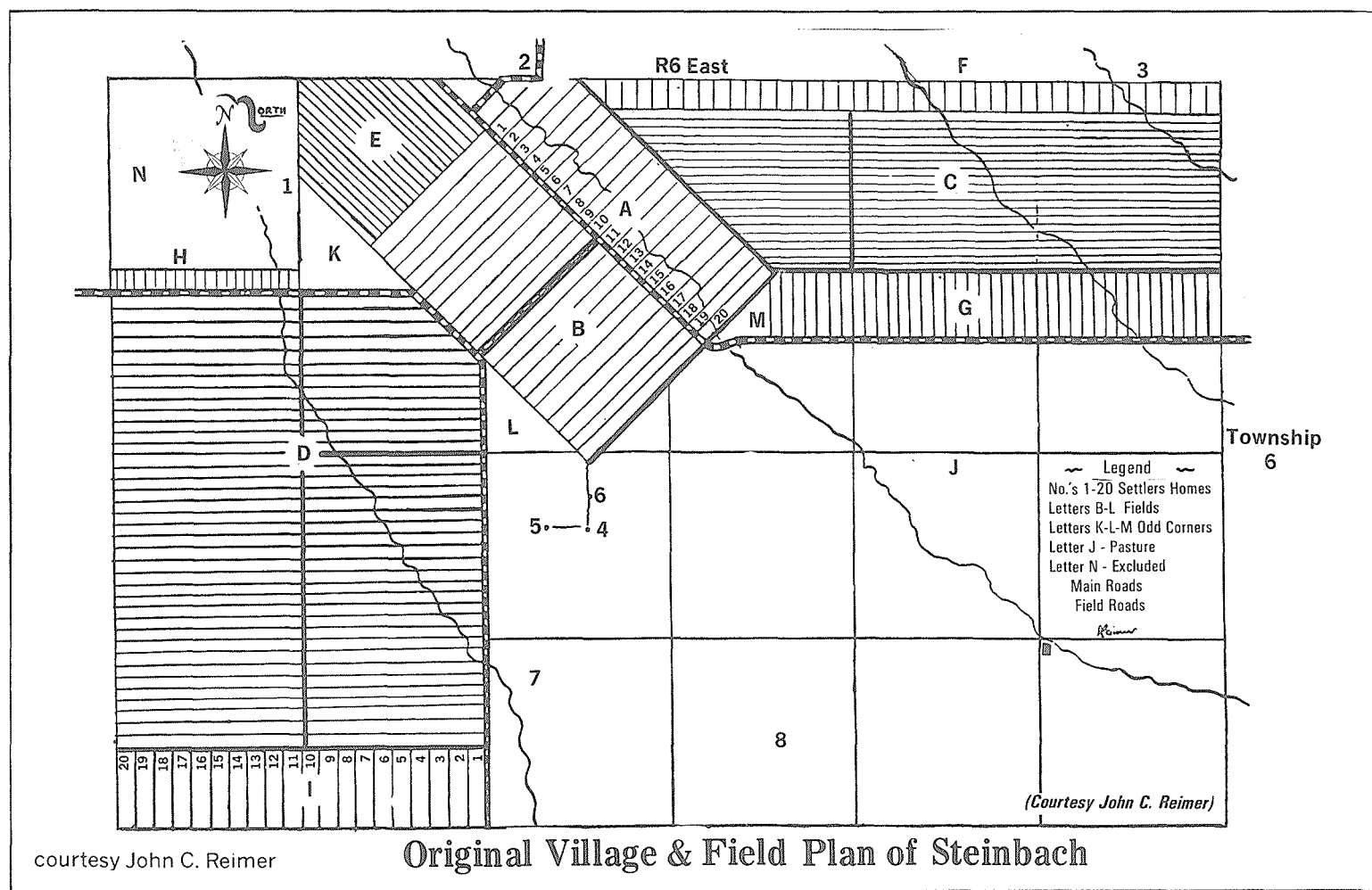
By 1956, the municipality's 75th anniversary, Hanover had become one of the most heavily populated municipalities with a population of 6,570 (1951 census) in spite of the fact that only four of its eight townships could be considered good farmland. Ten post offices served the area.

* Within its limits were contained the Town of Steinbach, villages of Niverville and Grunthal and the post offices and settlements of Tourond, Chortitz, New Bothwell, Kleefeld, Sarto, Trentham, Pansy and Blumenort.

* The municipality had 33 school districts and 33 schools, five secondary, employing more than 50 teachers.

* Within the municipality a well-developed and growing network of roads served the rate-payers: 25 miles of provincial trunk highway, 15 miles of road maintained entirely by the province, 66 miles of approved market roads (built with the help of government grants), 72 miles of municipal gravel roads and more than 80 miles of dirt roads.

* Forty-one miles of constructed drainage ditches drained the run-off from Hanover's lands and other waters that followed the natural contours of the land. In addition, many road-side ditches had been designed to assist in farm land drainage.



6. Steinbach

Except for the absence of a hay meadow, the accompanying illustration is of a typical pioneer Mennonite village plan such as was followed by the first settlers in the East Reserve beginning in 1874.

Whenever a number of Mennonite settlers agreed to group together for the purpose of beginning a new village they picked what they believed to be an appropriate piece of land and laid out their community. Every settler took his 160 acre homestead and pooled it so that the land could be worked jointly.

In planning a new village the members would choose a village committee. The regulations were itemized and the contract or agreement called the **Verbindungsschrift** or document of union. Further legalities or regulations regarding administration were dealt with at council meetings.

The farm-village complex of Steinbach was laid out on the following sections: 25, 26, 27, 34, 35 and 36 on Township 6, Range 6 East.

The numbered plots which were laid out east of the village street were about six acre strips, some 220 feet wide. The homes were built some 60-80 feet from the street.

These lots were called **Feuerstaetten** (fireplaces, or places where the hearth was situated). Directly across the street from these lots were 10-acre parcels of land belonging to the same landowners and these lots were called **Katstaetten** (cottage steads).

Usually living on these 10-acre plots across the street from the landowners were the employees or old people.

The common cross-street in the Russian Mennonite villages on which the church and school stood was not planned for in Steinbach but established a few years later.

Names of the 18 families who founded the Village of Steinbach on September 23, 1874: (Number of people in each family in brackets). The number preceding the name designates the village lot.

1. Klaas Friesen (4)
2. Cornelius Fast (6)
3. Gerhard Warkentin (2)
4. Heinrich Brandt (5)
5. Rev. Jacob Barkman (8)
6. Cornelius Goossen (2)
7. Jacob S. Friesen (2)
8. Abram S. Friesen (5)
9. Peter Toews (7)
10. Johann R. Reimer (2)
11. and 12. Klaas R. Reimer (9)
13. Gerhard Giesbrecht (4)
14. Johann Wiebe (5)
15. Jacob T. Barkman (2)
16. Peter Barkman (5)
17. Johann S. Friesen (2)
18. Heinrich Fast (5)
19. and 20. Frank Kroeker (5)

As can be seen by the plan, the Steinbach village was laid out alongside the tiny creek from which it took its name.

Surrounding the village, as can be seen in the illustration, are the various long, narrow fields from which the settlers derived their livelihood. The reason for the strips was simple. If a farmer would have only one big block of land, it might be inferior or he could be wiped out by a prairie fire. The strip ensured that the good and bad would be more evenly shared by all.

The number of town lot coincided with the number of field and to ensure equality regarding the distance a farmer had to travel to work his field, the farmer nearest the field in

question would receive the outermost strip of land.

Surrounding the fields of arable land (narrow strips) were the small blocks of land laid out in the opposite direction. Only Steinbach and Blumenort are believed to have had these and they were really buffer zones against grasshopper invasions or stray cows.

Most of the arable land was in the fields marked "D" in the illustration.

Four main roads led out of the village itself. The road north passed through the English settlement of Clearsprings towards the neighbouring villages of Blumenort and Blumenhof and also eventually to Winnipeg.

The road east led to the French district.

In the Mennonite Low German this road was called **Brittiwach** meaning Metis road. The road south followed the **Hochruecken** or high ridge road to Grunthal and the road to the west went through Lichtenau, Reichenbach and Rosenfeld to Gruenfeld (Kleefeld).

The farm-village system broke up in Steinbach in 1910 for various reasons but primarily because of a lack of land within the farm-village system.

There is little evidence remaining of the old farm-village system in Steinbach today. Looking closely one might find rocks or indentations where the fields ended or ditches and woods were once built but in most cases even these signs have completely disappeared.

Steinbach administration

Steinbach was founded Sept. 18, 1874 by 18 Kleine Gemeinde (now Evangelical Mennonite Church) families. Though the agreements made by the settlers on how they would run affairs in Steinbach has not been preserved, many clauses were identical to those documented of other villages.

The **Verbindungsschrift der Dorfgemeinde Blumenort, 1878** (The Document of Union of the Village of Blumenort, 1878) has been preserved and it appears below, translated into English.

The Document of Union of the Village of Blumenort, 1878

Concerning the following points which we examined and gave approval at a general village gathering and which we all, as one fraternity, wish to participate in and individually underwrite:

FIRSTLY

We wish to establish a village settlement as we were accustomed to in previous years and utilize the individually-deeded land for the common good so that everyone can benefit equally from the wooded land, the arable land and meadows.

SECONDLY

All those who join this community are obligated to do a fair share of building dams,

fences and other work involved in the village.

THIRDLY

We agree to purchase livestock for breeding purposes, maintain schools and provide for various associated conveniences and expenses which are to be calculated into the costs of the homesteads.

FOURTHLY

If someone joins the village through taking over someone's property that person will be obligated to assist in the village expenses as stated in point three.

FIFTHLY

Because of the necessity of having a **Schulz** in every case, in every village who calls the neighbors together for the purpose of discussing community affairs, we are obligated to bring the matters presented to a quick conclusion and to attend each meeting whenever possible.

SIXTHLY

We also join together in the matter of hiring a shepherd to look after tending our livestock. No one has the right to herd his own livestock to avoid paying the shepherd or to seek better pasture.

SEVENTHLY

The cost of school buildings is to be assessed on newly-purchased land as well as on the homestead.

EIGHTHLY.

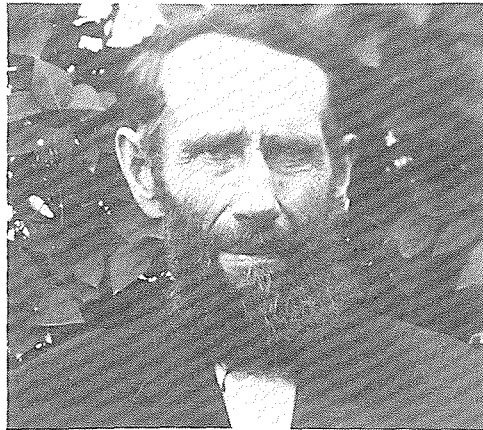
When someone makes an additional land purchase he is to meet all the required obligations to the village.

The following landowners have signed this document:

P. J. Wiebe
Abraham Penner
Martin Penner
Abraham Reimer
Peter Reimer
Peter Toews
Cornelius P. Friesen
Heinrich Penner
Peter Wiebe
Kornelius Penner
Isaac Penner
Peter Penner
Jacob Wiebe
Peter B. Toews
Isaac de Veer
Johann B. Toews
Heinrich Plett
J. Is. Friesen

Local government in the village of Steinbach was provided by **Schulz** and **Schultebott** from 1874-1920. (See chapter on local government).

The most difficult period of administration



John G. Barkman, one of the first **Shuits** or mayors of Steinbach prior to incorporation. Mr. Barkman, who served the community as mayor for around 25 years, was the son of Jacob Barkman who was leader of the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites when they first came to Manitoba in 1874. Mr. Barkman was the grandfather to a later mayor of Steinbach, Leonard A. Barkman.

—photo courtesy L. A. Barkman

during those years came in 1910-12 when the old farm village system broke up in Steinbach.

In 1912, the village proper was surveyed into lots and blocks and all other land divided among the owners. All 22 - ¼ sections were brought under the new system. In these three years many meetings were held before everything was finally settled.

The man at the helm of village affairs at this time was **Schult** John G. Barkman, son of the leader of the Kleine Gemeinde group that settled Steinbach in 1874 and mayor of the community for 25 years or more. Mr. Barkman was assisted by two other community business leaders — P. T. Barkman and A. S. Friesen. Mr. Friesen looked after the survey work.

On March 1, 1920 the village was formed into an Unincorporated Village District according to By-law No. 48 of the RM of Hanover.

A special meeting for the purpose of establishing a three-man committee to look after the management of the village was called by Hanover Reeve Johann Braun on March 12.

Such well-known names as John D. Goossen, J. R. Friesen, K. B. Reimer, K. I. Friesen, P. R. Friesen, C. F. Friesen, C. T. Kroeker, J. J. Reimer and H. H. W. Reimer, are on the record as having attended this first meeting.

Elected to the first town board were John D. Goossen, K. B. Reimer and K. R. Barkman.

The members went right to work. The record shows that these three men held the first meeting an hour after the ratepayers' meeting was adjourned and enacted as follows:

1. That J. J. Reimer be appointed secretary at an annual salary of \$35.00.
2. "That we call ourselves the Steinbach Village District (unincorporated)"
3. To open a bank account at the Royal Bank.
4. That the secretary buy such books, stationery and a rubber stamp needed to conduct the village business.

5. It was decided by lot that John D. Goossen remain in office for three years, K. R. Barkman for two years, and K. B. Reimer for one year.

According to the records, this business required only an hour's time.

Paging through the minutes, it is noteworthy that meetings were held for the purpose of discussing, among other things "Roadwork, sidewalks, etc." for the year 1920.

One resolution reads:

"That the Steinbach Village district furnish lumber and supplies to level sidewalks in front of gates, the ratepayers agreeing to do this work. (2) To build sidewalks along Hanover Street this year and along Mill Street next year.

A second resolution before that meeting states:

"That we demand of the council of the R.M. of Hanover to pay for our nuisance ground."

A month later, the account reveals that a board member was paid \$2.40 for a trip to Chortitz to attend an RM of Hanover council meeting. Apparently the request to the senior council had met with success.

Constable hired

The records indicate that the ordinary ratepayer took a keen interest in the affairs of his village during the time because the regular meetings were interspersed with ratepayers' meetings.

On July 12, at just such a ratepayers' meeting, it was duly moved and seconded "that the board appoint a constable in the village district to uphold law and order". And at a committee meeting one day later the following resolutions were passed:

"That Anton Shoen be employed as village constable at a salary of \$30 per month until Dec. 31, 1920. His duties to be as follows: Keep bicycles off sidewalks, to stop ball playing on village streets, blocking traffic on sidewalks for pedestrians, look after conditions of sidewalks and general nuisance, such as disturbing the peace in the village, etc."

Another thing villagers were conscious of was fire protection. Early in the year they purchased two chemical fire 'engines'. One of these was to be stationed at J. R. Friesen's garage, the other, at K. R. Barkman's.

Minutes in the Sept. 20, 1920 issue state that Jacob G. Kornelsen be appointed temporary secretary-treasurer "until the recovery of J. J. Reimer," and the minutes for the

next two years are recorded in the neat, scholarly hand of one of Steinbach's outstanding teachers.

At the same meeting it was requested that the town dig three wells on Main Street, not less than eight feet in diameter — one to be located opposite Friesen Avenue, one opposite the school (No. 1) and the third opposite the mill lot. A fire pump was purchased from the P. T. Barkman Milling Co. for \$200 to be paid without interest from the 1921 levy.

At a ratepayers' meeting held early in 1922, this financial statement was read and adopted. Total expenditures for the year had been \$2,935.21, an amount covered by a regular six mill village tax and a special levy for the chemical fire tanks.

According to the financial report, one of the three village wells had been completed at a cost of \$292.18; the chemicals tanks had cost \$998.27 and stationary and postage was \$12.75.

Other interesting motions at this meeting revealed a close parallel with today's problems. Some of these read:

— That business houses close on certain set hours and on Sundays;

— That a by-law be passed forbidding obscene language on the streets;

— That suitable accommodation be provided for arrested persons.

Street lights

The ratepayers were also interested in the luxuries made possible by progress. It was unanimously carried at one meeting that 15 electric lights be installed along the main street before spring. These lights were to be placed "in zig-zag style so that not only one side of the street be lighted." The motion was adopted 39-11.

At a committee meeting on July 30, 1921 a terse resolution reads: "Resolved to file a complaint for bad service against one of the operators with the chairman of the Steinbach Telephone Exchange". The telephone exchange was a co-operative enterprise and not associated with the town business. It was established in 1905.

Local industry promoted

That ratepayers were interested in furthering local manufacturing enterprise even at this early date can be gathered from a resolution passed unanimously at a meeting held on Dec. 30, 1921.

"Whereas P. T. Barkman & Sons propose to build a flour mill in the village of Steinbach; and whereas in our opinion such flour mill would be of great service not only to the village of Steinbach but also to the whole municipality of Hanover; be it resolved that we, the ratepayers of the village of Steinbach express ourselves strongly in favor of exempting the said flour mill from all municipal taxation for a period of 10 years."

At the third annual ratepayers' meeting held on Feb. 7, 1922, a motion to hire a night watchman and another "that we ask the municipal council to pass a by-law for a dog licence" were both defeated.

Nowadays, we'd call it a case of juvenile delinquency, but village fathers on April 9, 1922 probably didn't have a word for it — at any rate, they instructed the village constable "to make further investigations re: tying a wire across sidewalk opposite school."

During 1923 A. T. Loewen was hired as secretary-treasurer at the going rate of \$30 per year.

Ratepayers at this time already dreamt of things we only got around to doing quite recently. At one meeting in 1923 a motion was made "that we instruct the Board to build a suitable building for our fire engine, big enough to hold a second machine if necessary." A similar resolution in 1925 asked that "the Board investigate the cost of building a town hall".

Village Queen Crisis

An inconspicuous item at a ratepayers' meeting on Dec. 15, 1923 seems to have stirred up a major controversy in the village. The item in question, which carried successfully, simply reads: 'Moved by — and

seconded by — that we buy a Village Queen for \$1,500. Carried."

The Village Queen, it is revealed at a later session, was a power-driven fire pump. The citizens must have taken some pride in acquiring the machine but unfortunately when it arrived it couldn't be made to work — and local experts declared that the engine was second hand.

At the annual ratepayers' meeting on Feb. 5, 1924 the matter was brought up and the record reads as follows:

"After a discussion on what to do with the Village Queen, it was moved and seconded that we vote by ballot whether to send the machine back or not."

The vote, as recorded, indicated that 30 were for sending the 'Queen' back, four for keeping her. A committee meeting several days later decided to try to get back from the Toronto Company the \$133 paid in freight. This caused more difficulty as the company refused to accept the 'on sight' draft. With the aid of the bank, the matter was finally settled to everyone's satisfaction, and Steinbach villagers again began to look around for a new fire engine.

Curfew law

At a committee meeting in March, 1925, it was decided to hire a man to keep all children under 15 off the streets after 9 o'clock but at a ratepayers meeting held later, no decision on this move could be reached. Evidently it was dropped, since the record tells no more about it.

The question of a town hall again came up at the annual meeting in 1927 and increased interest in new streets and extension of streets was also apparent.

In 1928 a cemetery committee was elected and it was resolved to charge 'outsiders' \$2 for burial in the said cemetery.

Another item that will bring nostalgic memories to many of the older citizens appeared in the minutes of a March 28, 1928 meeting: "It is agreed to pay 6 cents per mile and \$3.00 per day on time on Piney Road matters."

Wages drop

An indication that Steinbach was hitting hard times is in evidence at the annual meeting on Feb. 4, 1931 "it is resolved that the Board hire H. R. Sobering as constable at \$20 per month. It is also resolved that four pails, two ladders, and three fire hooks be purchased for each fire engine. It was moved and seconded that hats and coats be bought for the volunteer firemen."

A year later, the question of street lights, which cost \$442.50 per year, received the attention of the meeting. A resolution to ask the flour mills "to give more light for less money" was drafted. At a later meeting the amount was reduced to \$390 and Constable Sobering was rehired for the season for \$225.

At a committee meeting in July of 1932 it was decided that "owing to a shortage of funds, street lights will be discontinued until January and the constable's term of employment will expire Dec. 31, 1932."

The 1932 annual statement shows that a total of \$1,234.48 was spent throughout the year. Wages were still skidding in 1933. At the first meeting that year, Const. H. R. Sobering was rehired at a salary of \$15 per month; the secretary, Mr. K. B. Reimer was to receive an annual salary of \$25.

The meeting expressed regret over the fact that Dr. Morantz had given notice to leave the district and the committee pledged full support to the Hospital Society in its attempt to find a qualified physician.

Street lights were to be turned on again on Feb. 25, 1933 (the town had been in darkness since July '32) at a cost of \$27.50 per month.

During 1933 and '34, action seems to be at a low ebb. Even attendance at ratepayers' meetings fell off. One item in March, 1935, however, is attention catching:

"After some discussion it was decided to drop negotiations with the Manitoba Power Commission for the time being, but that Steinbach Milling give us a preposition in two weeks."

Dr. Wiebe of Winkler was invited to come

to Steinbach since Dr. Marantz had already left.

It was resolved to erect several traffic signs and to build a cement sidewalk "5 feet wide" from J. J. Reimer's to P. S. Guenther's place on Main Street.

On Aug. 16 it was resolved to draw up a petition asking the Manitoba Power Commission to supply the village with electricity. The petition was to be circulated by the town constable.

Another resolution decreed that the concrete blocks in front of H. W. Reimers must be removed. (Ed. note: This was in preparation for building the curbing along Main Street.) Evidently, there were by-laws requiring milk vendors to have their cows T.B. tested. One of the vendors was asked to appear before Council. At his plea that he could not afford a pasteurization plant, he was given a year's time.

Cowherd's horn "a nuisance"

On July 7, 1943, a motion reads "That the cowherd be instructed to stop blowing his horn on the streets of Steinbach as citizens consider this a nuisance and that Const. Sobering notify him accordingly and confiscate the horn in case these instructions are not followed."

Thus, without the benefit of public plebiscite, the time-honored tradition of the cowherd was snuffed out.

In 1944 there was heard talk of town planning, and the constable's wages rocketed to \$30 per month. A milk by-law, long talked about, was now to go into effect.

But the most important resolution made during the year reads: "That John D. Goossen proceed with preliminaries for incorporation of the town."

Incorporation

The question of whether or not to incorporate was on the mind of the villagers for many years and became a perennial controversy in the early 1940's when some residents stated that incorporation should have already taken

place and others looked at some of the advantages in maintaining the old system and preferred staying with that.

There were advantages and disadvantages on both sides though there was no question that Steinbach needed incorporation by the 1940's.

In 1941 Jac. G. Kornelsen was asked to make a survey in town to find whether incorporation would be preferable to the unincorporated village district system. His report, which favored incorporation, was brought before the Steinbach Board of Trade and this organization then agreed with municipal council to go ahead with the plans.

Then the provincial government was approached on the matter and officials advised waiting until the end of the War. Consequently there was a long delay and by 1945 incorporation had become painfully necessary as the municipal laws which had been designed for country administration were unable to cope with the complex requirements of the large business centre which Steinbach had become.

By Sept., 1946 the process to incorporate the village had been completed and after a special meeting of the provincial cabinet on October 22 the village ascended to the status of incorporated town effective January 1, 1947.

It was an exciting moment. It meant that the people living in the village had broken all but the friendship ties with the municipality of which they had so long been a part. The assets and liabilities of the one square mile consisting of Section 35-6-6E (with the exception of 70 acres comprising block 47 of the town plan in the northeast corner belonging to H. W. Reimer estate plus part of plan 4068 comprising that area between Mill Street and Main Street) were transferred to a new set of books, to be administered by a new secretary. The taxes which had hitherto been imposed and spent by the municipality, were now to be collected by a new council—a council elected only by the ratepayers of the town.

The town was divided into wards as follows:

WARD ONE - north of Reimer Avenue and west of Main Street up to the west section line. In the north end: west of the section line to Mill Street including the triangle made by Main Street and the section line.

WARD TWO - east of Main Street, north of Reimer Avenue.

WARD THREE - west of Main Street, south of Reimer Avenue.

WARD FOUR - east of Main Street, south of Reimer Avenue.

The last village board before incorporation consisted of A. D. Penner, chairman, Jonas Friesen and John Kreutzer. Other men who had served on the board for years were C. T. Loewen, J. E. Regehr and K. B. Reimer. Mr. Reimer was secretary for over 15 years.

Steinbach elected its first town council on Nov. 28, 1946.

K. R. Barkman, local businessman, who took the mayor's chair, was elected by acclamation.

Vernon Barkman, telephone operator, councillor for Ward 1, was elected by acclamation.

K. J. B. Reimer, retired farmer, councillor for Ward 2, was elected by acclamation.

A. D. Penner, car dealer, defeated Henry B. Peters, labourer, by only six votes to become councillor for Ward 3.

Eugene Derksen, publisher, defeated A. T. Loewen to become councillor for Ward 4.

Inauguration of the first council took place at the municipal hall on January 9, 1947. Hanover reeve J. R. Barkman handed the town charter to his brother Mayor K. R. Barkman. Mayor Barkman, in replying to the reeve, told the audience that much work and planning had gone into obtaining the charter but this was only the beginning.

"We'll have to work hard to make this a town," the first mayor told the citizens. "We have a good fire brigade but no equipment. We must plan streets and lanes, sanitation and many other things. Remember that council can do nothing—all these things must have your full co-operation. I can well remember when town meetings were held in my father's house. Sometimes there were hot arguments and usually it was those who had done the least who had the most complaints. Let us rather imitate those who had few complaints and worked hard for the general welfare."

Mayor K. R. Barkman

The man who guided the affairs of the community for 12 years following incorporation, K. R. Barkman, was born and educated in Steinbach though he and his wife, the former Maria Fast, spent 23 years in another com-

munity and province.

It is remarkable that one man could have his mark so indelibly in two communities—Steinbach, Man. and Foam Lake, Sask.—but that is the case.

Prior to Mr. Barkman's election as mayor of the incorporated town of Steinbach in 1947, he served on the Foam Lake town council for 18 years and it was here that he gained much of the experience that he would require in later years.

When he moved back to Steinbach in August, 1946 it was to establish a thriving business—Barkman Hardware—with his sons.

Aside from the tremendous gains the community made during the years of his tenure he also found time for numerous other positions. He was the first chairman of the Eastern Manitoba Development Board when it was organized in 1950, served as a representative on the Children's Aid Society board, was civil defence co-ordinator for the Steinbach area and chairman of the hospital board for several years.

When the town was incorporated in 1947 the streets of Steinbach were in a mess. None were paved and some were not even gravelled. Paving Main Street was the first task that the new council undertook and it was the first of the improvements that resulted in the rapid growth of Steinbach in the 1950's.

Another great improvement was the installation of sewer and water 10 years later, in 1956. The total assessment of the town is presently 10 times what it was at the date of incorporation and much of the credit must be given to the mayor and the men who sat on the council during the years these improvements were pushed through.

Mr. Barkman also realized the importance of relating Steinbach to other towns and cities in Manitoba and became one of the organizers and vice-president of the Manitoba Urban Association. He was also appointed to the Manitoba Good Roads Association and made honorary life member in 1967.

After 12 years at the helm of Steinbach's municipal government, Klaas R. Barkman, far better known by then as "K. R." stepped down from the chair of office.

At a testimonial dinner in January, 1959, all the town's 1959 council members plus all but two of the former ones rose briefly to pay tribute to the retiring mayor. "K. R.", in turn,

referred in terms of deep appreciation to the town's original council.

First mayoralty election in '59

K. R. Barkman's announcement that he would not stand for re-election in the fall 1959 municipal elections came in mid-September and caused more than a ripple of excitement in local political circles.

L. A. Barkman, assistant mayor at the time, said he'd run for the mayor's job on the one condition that there was an election.

His challenge was taken up within a week as A. D. Penner, up until 1957 a councillor for Ward 4 and former chairman of the village council, threw his hat into the ring.

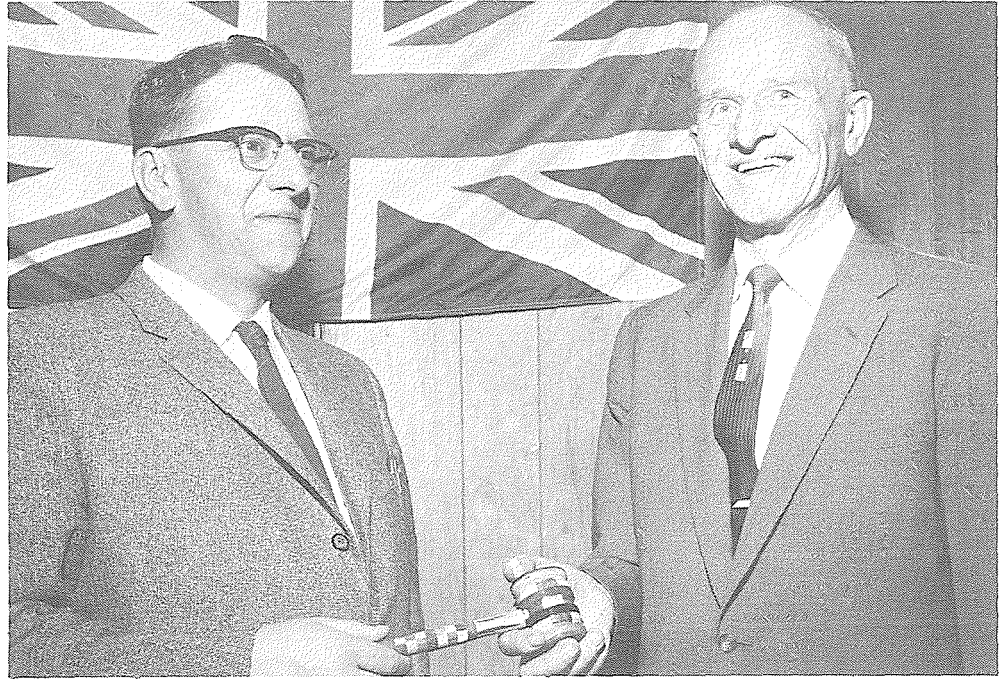
Too high taxation was the major plank in Mr. Penner's platform. He pointed out that very large sums of money had been spent on waterworks and other improvements and that the town had to be run in a business-like manner. "With council's co-operation," promised "A. D.", "taxes will be lowered by at least eight per cent plus an additional reduction of eight per cent in the water district."

Concerning A. D.'s statement that he would lower taxes by eight per cent, L. A. Barkman said that in most areas the water and sewer levy would come down by 35-40 per cent, not eight per cent. Most items on the general levy were uncontrollable, however, he said, but he would do his utmost to reduce taxes here as well.

Mr. Penner said one of the first steps he would take if elected mayor would be to enlarge the borders of the town. L. A. said he would make a great effort to establish the highest efficiency in civic administration.

On Oct. 24, 1958 the Steinbach ratepayers went to the ballot boxes and elected Leonard A. Barkman as the second mayor of Steinbach since incorporation with a handy majority of 683-391. At 38, he became one of the province's youngest mayors.

A Steinbach native and the son of late well-known Steinbach minister, Rev. Jacob F. Barkman, L. A. Barkman was one of a family of six boys and one girl. He had been married in 1945 to Miss Agnes Reimer. Though most



Klaas R. Barkman, right, Steinbach's first mayor following incorporation January 1, 1947, passed the gavel to L. A. Barkman January 1, 1959 after 12 years service to the community. Mr. Barkman defeated A. D. Penner 683 votes to 391 for the position. In 1970, after 12 years in office, Mr. Barkman stated he would not seek re-election and A. D. Penner became mayor by acclamation.

—Carillon News photo

people were unaware of it, his grandfather, the late John G. Barkman, had been **Schult** or mayor of the village for many years prior to incorporation.

No newcomer to politics, L. A. had, at the time of his election as mayor, already spent seven years as councillor for Ward Two during which time he had served as chairman of the town's finance committee, chairman of the fire commission, assistant chairman of the public works committee and acting mayor.

Besides his political experience he had filled a number of other posts such as that of vice-president of the chamber of commerce and deputy governor of the Kinsmen Club for a section of the province that included Winnipeg and St. Boniface. He was also on the executive of the Manitoba Urban Association.

Best known as Steinbach's International Harvester dealer at the time he was elected as

mayor, Mr. Barkman had been in business since 1943. In that year he'd bought Southeast Transfer in partnership with Peter J. Reimer. He took over the business completely three years later. He had worked for Penner's Transfer for four years and knew the ins and outs of trucking.

After five years with Southeast Transfer, Mr. Barkman sold out to the Colemans and went into the farm machinery business with Pete A. Toews. Five years later, in 1953, he bought out his partner and became sole owner. In later years he expanded into electrical appliances and then also took over the Pontiac Buick car agency in 1958.

The business expanded many times over the years and in 1970 Mr. Barkman took three of his long-time employees into partnership. This gave him more time to serve the community and area as mayor and member of the Legislature for La Verendrye constituency.

Barkman steps down

In late summer, 1970, Mayor Barkman, after 12 consecutive years as mayor of Steinbach (his predecessor, K. R. Barkman also served 12 years) announced he would not be seeking re-election in the fall, 1970 municipal elections.

"It is with deep regret that I announce my intention of not running for office in the forthcoming term," Mr. Barkman said in a prepared statement. "Family and political matters (Mr. Barkman is legislative member of La Verendrye) are crowding my schedule to an extent whereby I feel I must put in too many hours to do justice to the important affairs of this fast growing community."

Mr. Barkman, 50, said he wished to make the announcement at this time so that other persons seeking the post would have ample time to prepare themselves. His post expired on Dec. 31.

Though there was some speculation that one of the veteran councillors might now seek the position, two businessmen announced they would seek the post—A. D. Penner and James Penner, president of the Penner-owned grocery stores.

Just as residents were looking forward to a mayoralty race, it was learned that the latter candidate was ineligible to run due to a technicality over property ownership.

As a result, local auto dealer A. D. Penner was uncontested on nomination day, Oct. 7 and officially became Steinbach's third mayor on Jan. 1, 1971. The mayoralty brought Mr. Penner's municipal political career to a climax following his active participation on both Steinbach town council and the previous village board. He had served a total of over 11 years on both councils including his chairmanship of the village board prior to incorporation in 1946.

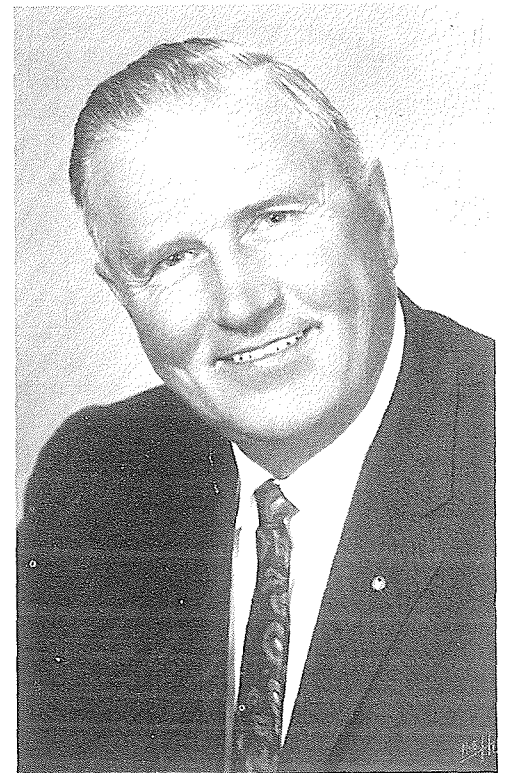
One of Steinbach's biggest success stories, Mr. Penner virtually started an automotive trend in Manitoba when he opened his car dealership in Steinbach in 1937 in a 20x24-foot shed on Main Street.

Using every stunt known to salesmen and many he invented himself, Mr. Penner made a mark for himself as a salesman and business-

man. In 1941 he formed a partnership with his younger brother John. The partnership lasted until Dec. 1952 and in the meantime the Penner brothers had formed the now large-scale Penner Tire and Rubber Co. and also the road building firm of Penner Construction.

The Dodge dealership practically set the pace of business growth in Steinbach. In 1946 A. D. Penner had been one of the main promoters to incorporate Steinbach into a town and 12 years later he again paced the business community by housing his auto dealership in the largest, most modern Dodge agency in Western Canada in a building covering almost 14,000 square feet of floor space. His construction business also continued to show steady growth.

Mr. Penner said several times prior to election that his biggest concern for Steinbach was the creation of jobs. He said providing jobs was absolutely essential in keeping young people in the community and in seeing continued growth of the town.



Mayor A. D. Penner
1971-

The town office and civic centre

For many years prior to Steinbach's incorporation the village council held its meetings in the Goossen block. After incorporation, a corner in the Credit Union basement (now the Evangel Book Shop building) served as the council chambers and John Schellenberg, now secretary-treasurer of the RM of Hanover, was the first secretary-treasurer (He was preceded, prior to incorporation, by Miss Mintie Reimer and succeeded by Henry Braun and then Jake Rempel).

The town did not have a building of its own until January, 1954 when Mayor K. R. Barkman, Rene Jutras, M.P., the Hon. Edmond Prefontaine and Deputy Minister M. Fisher officially opened Steinbach's first town office.

It was the old post office building at the corner of Main and Reimer and had been purchased from the federal government for \$2,500. To mark this historic step in the progress of the community, the local boys' band played a few numbers and the mayor cut the ribbon. The speeches were cancelled due to sub-zero temperatures but some 60 guests attended a civic dinner following the ribbon cutting.

This building served the town from 1954 to 1966. By the late 1950's it was already too small and after much discussion town council decided in May, 1956, to hold a referendum on whether or not to build a civic centre. There was one condition, however, and that was that the Steinbach business community give its approval.

A special meeting called by the chamber to discuss the issue was held the next week and 30 out of 32 members voted by secret ballot to support a resolution which read:

"Resolved that the Chamber of Commerce go on record supporting town council for the construction of a new civic administration building."

In attendance at the meeting was architect Norman Reimer who described his unique plans for the centre.

"A civic building is one which must visually

express more than its day-to-day function as an office for conducting town business," Reimer told the C. of C. members.

The chamber's endorsement of the new civic centre was echoed on June 23 by a majority of the voters. Ratepayers approved the new structure 289 votes to 121.

The money by-law authorized the borrowing of \$128,000 and the new structure was to be completed by March 31, 1966.

Plans for the new centre were worked out rapidly and on Sept. 21, 1965 more than 100 people attended the sod-turning ceremony. Successful bidder on the large job was the C. T. Loewen firm which was awarded the base contract for \$163,686. A bulldozer began excavation work minutes after the sod-turning ceremony at 11:30 a.m.

With a flourish of trumpets and congratulations all round, Steinbach's new administration building was officially opened on Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 27, 1966.

A large crowd including 50 or more school children assembled for the ceremonies. In welcoming them, Mayor Barkman commented that the council was "aware that this happy event would not be possible if it were not for your co-operation and your tax dollars."

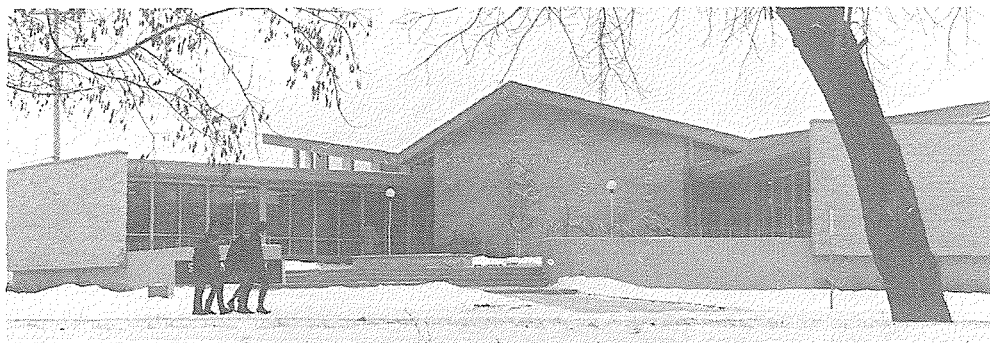
After the invocation by Rev. Frank Isaac, Lieutenant-Governor R.S. Bowles brought greetings from the province. "This is another sign that Steinbach is one of Manitoba's great communities," he stated. "We are particularly proud of the people of Steinbach for having the foresight to erect this magnificent building. Our best wishes and congratulations go to you on this auspicious occasion." he concluded.

Also offering congratulations was the Hon. Harry Enns, provincial minister of agriculture, R. A. Wangling, president of the Manitoba Urban Association and various other dignitaries and public officials.

Mayor Barkman mentioned the original members of council who were present. They included: Vern Barkman - ward 1; K. J. B. Reimer - ward 2; A. D. Penner - ward 3; and E. Derksen - ward 4.

Other previous councillors mentioned were: Jack Brandt, J. A. Penner, A. A. Toews, Ike Kroeker, Sid Toews, Norman Toews and Pete Thiessen.

Before cutting the ribbon, Mayor Barkman briefly outlined the cost of the building. Total



The Steinbach Civic Centre, officially opened September 27, 1966.

—Carillon News photo

cost was \$212,000, with the net debt standing at \$96,000. Breakdown of the cost was as follows: land - \$30,000; Development Loan Fund

- \$28,000; building reserve - \$54,000; 25 per cent forgiveness - \$32,000; and \$10,000 for winter works.

The story of Steinbach's growth

"Steinbach does not appear to have a particularly advantageous situation for a trading centre. It is not located in the midst of the good agricultural land of township 7-6, and it was cut off by the Clearsprings settlement from the Mennonites living in the one good farming area to the north and northwest. There were hardly any farmers south of Steinbach in the 1880's, and there was no settlement to the east; later the few people who did settle there were French rather than Mennonite. Steinbach is at the extreme eastern boundary of the Reserve, not on the way to Winnipeg; and it was settled by a relatively poor group of Mennonites with few economic resources. Why then did a place with so few advantages develop?

"Steinbach's rapid rise to a pre-eminent position among the Mennonite villages can only be

explained, especially in the formative years, by the presence there of a number of ambitious, hard-working men. Though poor, they made an attempt to start such businesses as a store, a blacksmith shop and a grist mill and when they had proved themselves capable of supplying the local market, they pressed on to expand their establishments, introduce new ones, and always bring in more trade. Soon there was no doubt that Steinbach was the one centre where all the services required by the Mennonites could be obtained. It was this concerted effort on the part of a few men, rather than the isolated endeavours of a single individual that gave Steinbach its initial impetus."

Professor John Warkentin in his 1960 Doctor of Philosophy thesis: "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba." University of Toronto.



Steinbach in the early 1920's with the beginning of Hanover Street visible at right. The buildings with identifying numbers above them are: (1) J. W. Reimer farm (2) E. M. B. Church (3) School (4) H. W. Reimer store (5) T. M. Wiebe Co. (6) J. E. Regehr residence (7) Steinbach Lumber Yards (8) Steinbach Meat Market (9) C. T. Loewen Lumber

Yard (10) Loewen Garage (11) H. W. Reimer residence (12) K. Reimer Sons (13) N. S. Campbell II Law office (14) Radke Shoe Repair (15) Dr. Schilstra residence.

This photo was taken from the flour mill facing northwest.

—photo courtesy Wall's Studio

Business frowned upon by church

In the first years following the founding of Steinbach in 1874 by 18 Kleine Gemeinde settlers, the trade that was necessary was done in Winnipeg or at the Hudson's Bay store at Ste. Anne.

As an occupation, business was frowned upon by church leaders and farming was generally considered the only really proper occupation for bonafide Mennonites.

Necessity bred invention however and Steinbach's first store came about by accident rather than planning.

Three years after the settlers arrived in Steinbach, in 1877, Klaas Reimer went to Winnipeg by ox team to buy some goods. He stopped in at a Jewish storekeeper's shop and was asked whether he wouldn't like to take some merchandise along to sell to the Steinbach settlers. Mr. Reimer replied that it would not be possible as he had no money. The storekeeper replied that this was no problem and gave him some \$300 worth of goods.

Though Mr. Reimer didn't really know what he'd gotten himself into, he took the box along anyhow. People began buying merchandise from him and Mr. Reimer found that he had a natural gift for this line of work. The large box in which he had received his goods from the Jewish merchant in Winnipeg became his counter and did not leave the Reimer house until the large Central Store (later Marshall Wells) was built on Main Street. Mr. Reimer rapidly became the community's wealthiest merchant and had a hand in various other pioneer business ventures including the steam mill.

Along with this pioneer there were a handful of other leaders who laid the foundations of today's business community.

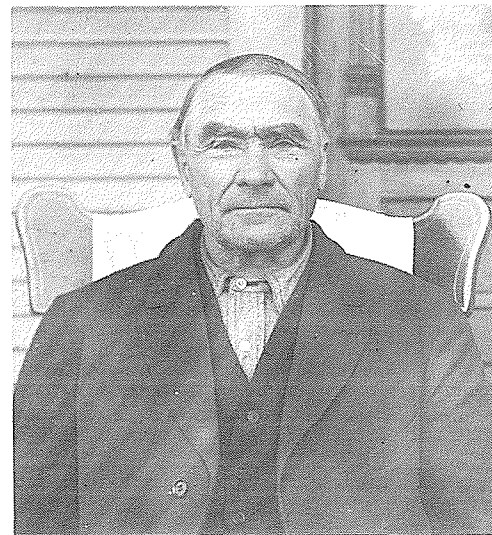
Most notable of these was A. S. Friesen, first village mayor, first postmaster and mechanical pioneer of Eastern Manitoba who bought the first threshing machine seen in the Steinbach district in 1876. Mr. Friesen built the Steinbach windmill in 1877 and also operated the first sawmill (1876) and lum-

ber camp, bought the first real binder that tied sheaves of grain and the first steam threshing outfit.

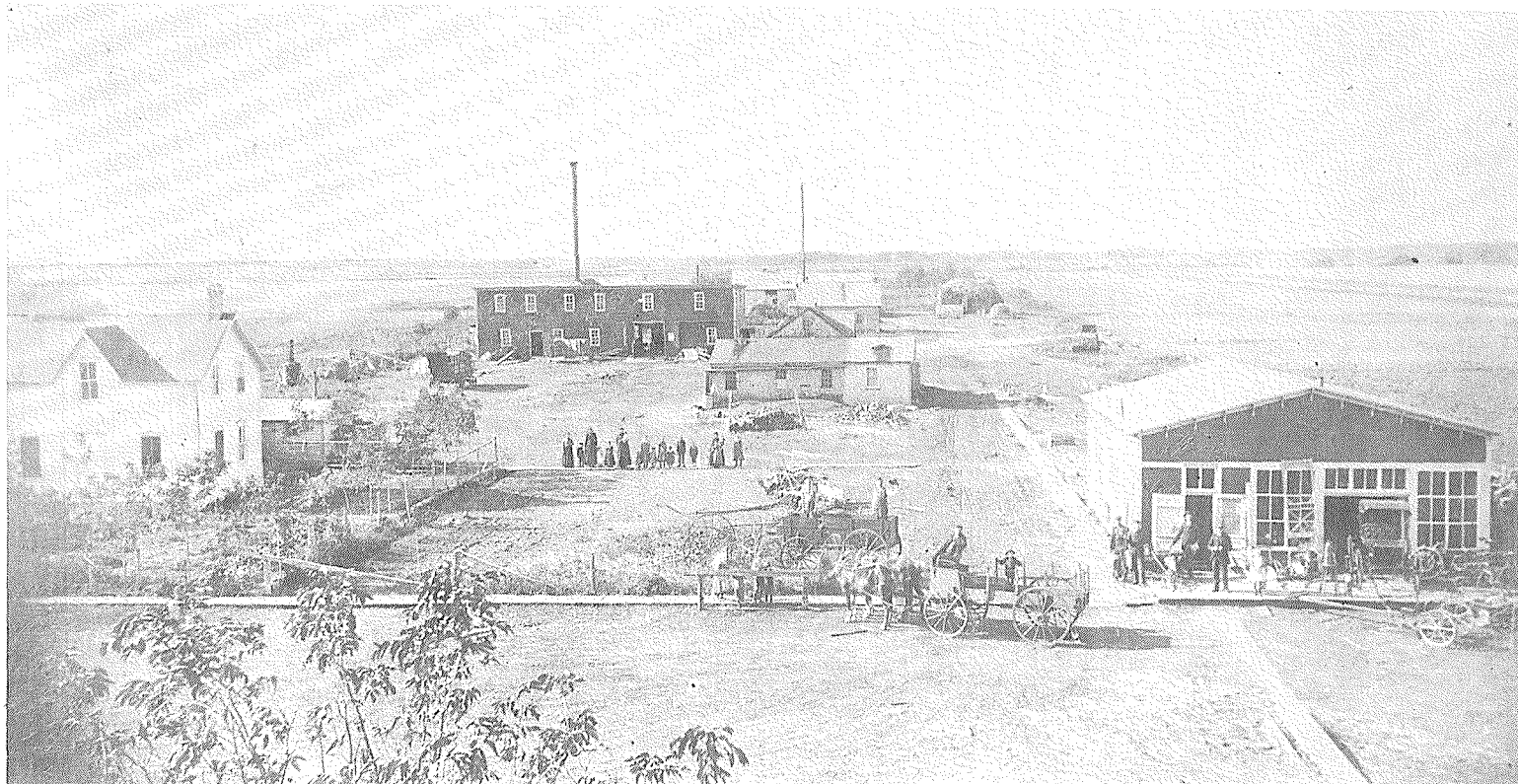
His mechanical genius passed on to his sons. Two of these, K. R. and P. R. Friesen, founded the Friesen Machine Shop with their father in 1882. A lot of progress that Steinbach enjoyed had its beginning behind the Friesen Machine Shop sign. It was the technical capability of these founders that helped mechanize Steinbach far in advance of its time.

Another son of A. S. Friesen, J. R. Friesen, became even better known than his father. He founded the successful J. R. Friesen firm in 1903 and probably became the first Ford dealer in Western Canada in 1912. Aside from introducing the first automobile industry to Steinbach he sold implements by the carload. J. R. Friesen was the first dealer to sell Fordson tractors in Canada in 1916 and pioneered many other "firsts" in the automobile and implement industry.

Aside from these main business leaders there were also men like Klaas W. Reimer who managed Steinbach's first cheese factory in 1889 and Peter K. Barkman, the best millwright in the East Reserve. Mr. Barkman built the first grist mill in Steinbach in 1877 and in 1880, together with several partners, set up a steam-powered flour mill.



Abram S. Friesen, outstanding Steinbach pioneer and businessman.



In many respects the Steinbach of today has its beginning here, on A. S. Friesen's yard. Here the remarkable Mr. Friesen, who was a mechanical genius in his own right, built Steinbach's windmill in 1877 and here he and his sons K. R. and P. R. Friesen, built the Friesen Machine Shop in 1892. Another son of A. S. Friesen, J. R. Friesen, started the implement business at right in 1903 and later intro-

duced the automobile industry to Steinbach. The house on the left was the Klaas R. Friesen family's. The dark building at the rear centre was the machine shop. The Friesen Avenue of today probably runs right beside J. R. Friesen's implement shop, and the large farm wagon behind the hitching rail in centre is probably standing on the spot where the Goossen block is today.

More than a few of Steinbach's present enterprising businessmen can trace their descent from one of these men.

With the services provided by the above-mentioned businessmen establishing Steinbach as a trade centre as well as an agricultural village, other communities competed with Steinbach to become the one main trading centre.

Steinbach's competition lay with two communities — Niverville and Giroux. Both had a railroad station, which Steinbach sorely lacked, but neither had the enterprising businessmen that Steinbach had, and these had set their roots in Steinbach and refused to move.

Transportation of goods was the greatest problem facing the community and when the Canadian Northern Railway began surveying in preparation for its main line east of Winnipeg to eastern Canada in 1895, there was speculation that it would be built through Steinbach.

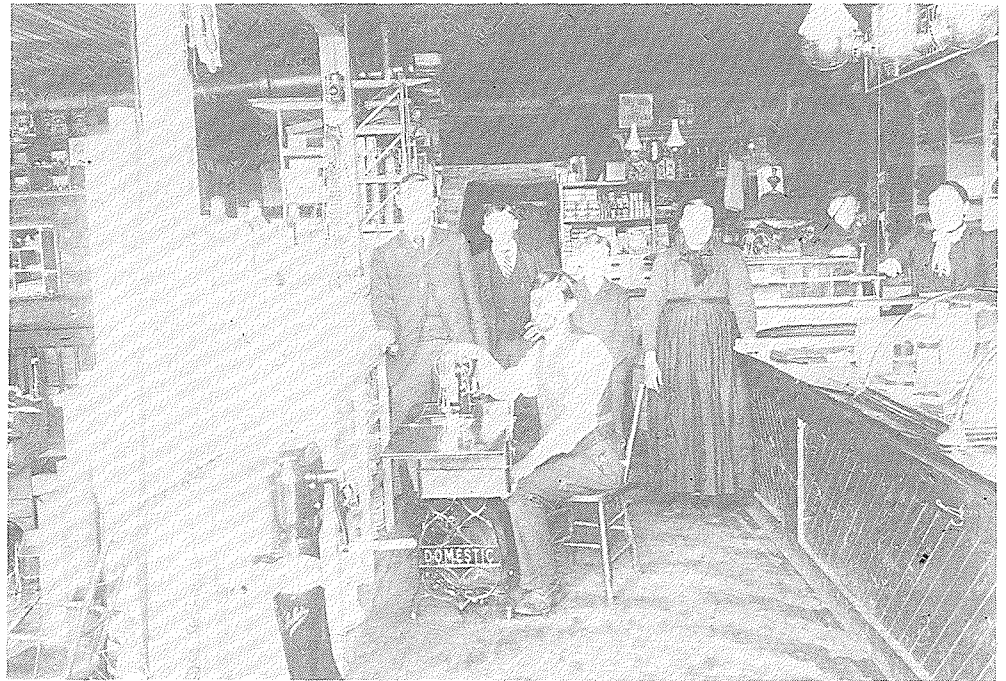
Whether or not Steinbach actually wanted

the railroad has been a matter of considerable controversy over the years. Some historians have stated that the community's religious leaders were opposed to the railway because of the "worldly" influences it would bring. Others say that Steinbach merchants would have been only too happy to have the facilities to solve their transportation problems.

Close examination tends to indicate that there probably was some truth to both sides and that while some people wanted the railway, others preferred it to bypass Steinbach.

Whatever the feelings of the people in Steinbach, however, the line was built just north of the Reserve. The surveyors and railway officials, whose carriages churned up the dust in Steinbach for many weeks, sized up the terrain and said the railroad would run in a straight line from Ste. Anne to La Broquerie along a ridge of high land.

Even though the railway was not built right through Steinbach, it did boost the com-



The oldest photograph of the inside of a Steinbach store. Little is known of the store or the people on the faded photograph. This store is believed to have been owned by A. R. Friesen and was located approximately where the J. R. Friesen garage stands today. The man seated at the sewing machine is Jacob Quiring. The lady at the centre is Mrs. A. R. Friesen and the lady behind the counter is Mrs. John Hiebert. This photo was taken around the turn of the century.

—photo courtesy the Friesen family

munity because Giroux and La Broquerie were a lot closer than Winnipeg. Beginning in 1898 Steinbach merchants began using the two stations to ship and receive their goods.

Giroux got the bulk of the shipping trade. The station there was named the Steinbach station for several years and a 40,000 bushel capacity grain elevator had been erected by 1900. By this time it was clear, however, that Steinbach, with a growing population of around 450 would be hard to replace as the major trading centre in the Reserve. Giroux was too close to Steinbach and lacked the trading area required to support a large centre. Niverville was too close to Winnipeg and poorly connected by road to other parts of the Reserve.

Despite the fact that Giroux had a number of businesses including several hotels, a newspaper and a killing plant at one time, these all folded up over the years and either died out entirely or moved to Steinbach.

Though Steinbach more than held its own up to then, the years 1910 and 1911 marked two of the greatest milestones in the history of the community.

1910 marked the breakup of the farm village system and the community became more business oriented as the village homes began to move out to make more room for commercial establishments.

1911 marked the beginning of the automobile era and this, probably more than anything else, established Steinbach firmly as the trading centre of the entire Southeast.

As also related in another chapter, the one thing that stands out in the story of the growth of Steinbach is the ingenuity and inventiveness of its people. At no time were the business leaders ever content to just get by with the way they found things. They overcame obstacle after obstacle and improvised time and time again in all areas of their occupations.

Gifted with an inventive nature — many were bonafide inventors — and good business sense, they spent little or no time in frivolous matters and put themselves wholeheartedly into their work.

The first car tooted in an era of progress

A fascination for anything mechanical is also evident among much of the pioneer stock and the community, with the coming of the gasoline engine, really came into its own. The implement shops became garages and J. R. Friesen's first Model N car in 1912 tooted in an era of progress that continues to this day.

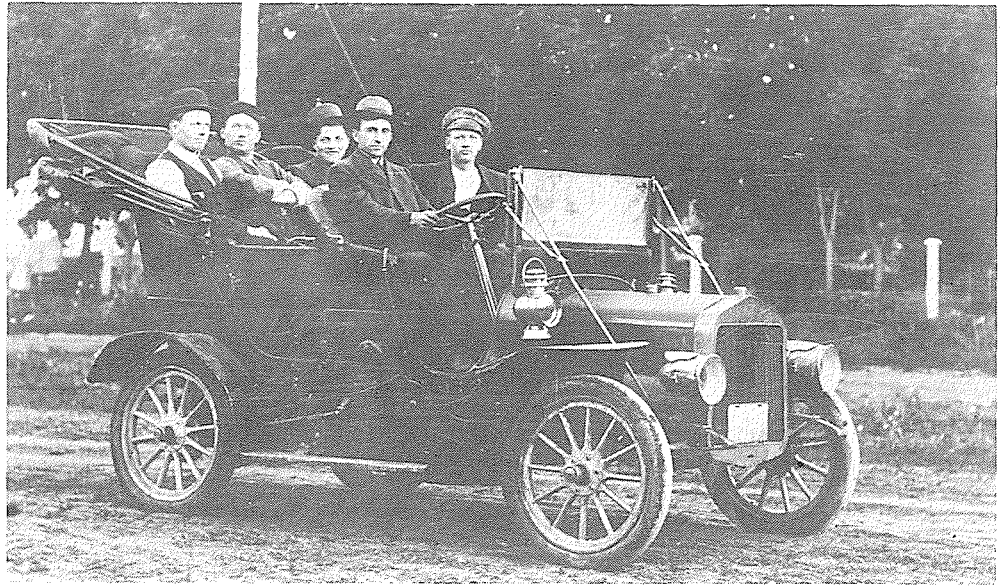
The automobile was a double blessing. Not only did it provide an important industry and employment but it left the community less dependent on the railway. With the improved roads, the horse and buggy days were gone for good.

Other industry also helped the community grow. One of the oldest and perhaps most important local industries, C. T. Loewen & Sons, had its beginning in 1905. (See chapter on lumber industry). During its early years the firm's activities were confined to the cutting and sale of lumber. Shortly afterwards a line of other building materials were added and the first millwork equipment was purchased after World War I.

In 1932 the company began to make beekeeper's supplies and by 1936 it had become Canada's leading producer in this field. After the last war, this line of business declined. Emphasis of the company's operations shifted to sash, doors and millwork and resulted in the completion of a large factory in 1956. The company became one of the pioneers in Manitoba's then-unique industry of ready-built houses.

The extra services also brought in important trade. The Northern Crown Bank opened a branch in Steinbach in July, 1917. Penner's Transfer was started in 1923 and a regular bus service was run by K. R. Toews in the 1930's. The churches drew people and the then-new Steinbach hospital opened its doors in December, 1929.

A real light and power plant followed in 1936 and there were more garages and even a hotel. In June, 1938 the **Steinbach Post** reported that never before had progress been more in evidence in the community. Half a



One of the first factory-built cars to navigate Steinbach's streets or trails was this 1912 or 1913 Ford owned by A. A. Reimer. Mr. Reimer is at the wheel with Isaac T. Loewen in the front seat. The man at left in the rear is Jacob Schmidt. In the centre is J. R. Friesen and at right is P. S. Rempel.

dozen businesses had enlarged premises and three new residences were going up on Elm Street.

By that year (1938) Steinbach boasted 45 business places. There were six stores (including H. W. Reimer's where you could buy everything from bobby pins to tractors), two lumber yards, two machine shops, a large hotel, several cafes, three barber shops, one beauty parlor, one bakery, the flour mill, four car dealers, a body and paint shop and several other small businesses.

The new areas had sprung up around Steinbach by 1936 and were officially named Steinbach East and Steinbach South.

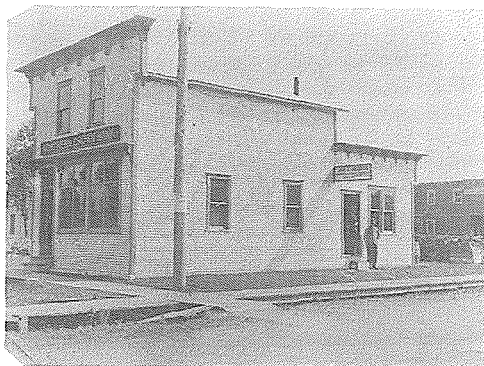
Actually, both had already been given names. Steinbach East, it was jokingly said, had the fine Italian name of "Hunga Veh Di" (Low German for Hunger Beware) and the second had the proud Russian name of "Tchlen Moscow" (Low German for Little Moscow). Understandably the residents in these areas didn't favor these names and their implications, and suggested others. New ones were provided but they didn't catch on so the Steinbach Board of Trade suggested the official names.

The board of trade did much more than suggest names for new growth areas, however. Made up of the same men who had built up the Steinbach business community, the board went after new trade with determination and after the Second World War the business-minded community boomed. Incorporation, a new influx of Mennonites from Russia, new roads and better transportation, hydro, the hospital and special services, waterworks, all played a part.

Playing an important role in making the entire Southeast Steinbach conscious was the **Carillon News** which had its beginning in 1946. Promoting local as well as area progress, it did much to make Steinbach the economic hub of the Southeast.

By the 1950's Steinbach was enjoying a building boom. New residences and businesses sprang up. These were the years when the sewing factory opened its doors and several businesses grew to the point where they built branch or main offices outside the community or province.

The first local firm to seek a market on the national field was probably C. T. Loewen's who started selling beekeepers supplies from a



This branch of the Northern Crown Bank was opened in Steinbach Feb. 20, 1917. J. M. R. Holst was the first manager. The Royal Bank took over July 1, 1918. Managers and their dates of service follow.

J. M. R. Holst: Feb. 20, 1917 to July 1, 1918 (Northern Crown Bank); J. M. R. Holst: July 1, 1918 to Dec. 30, 1918 (The Royal Bank); J. MacPhail: Dec. 24, 1918 to March 24, 1924; J. P. McMillan: March 17, 1924 to August 9, 1929; M. Kissuk: August 6, 1929 to June 16, 1946; T. G. Smith: June 6, 1946 to Dec. 31, 1946 (relieving manager); T. G. Smith: Jan. 1, 1947 to Nov. 1, 1968 (manager); J. Fries: Nov. 1, 1968 to

mail order catalogue in 1936.

Another national firm was begun by car dealer John D. Penner who in 1950 placed the first full-page advertisement ever published in the Free Press weekly by a Steinbach firm.

The story behind that ad could fill a chapter but in brief the advertisement dealt with changing over tractor wheels from steel to rubber.

Several years previous John Penner had wondered to himself why no one had yet built a complete tractor wheel so that farmers could keep their steel wheels for seasons when these would be more practical and still use rubber for most field and pulling work.

Patterns for the many varied tractor wheels were made and pretty soon the invention became so popular that tires were being sold across the country and branch offices sprang up in every major city in western Canada.

Another man who had a hand in much local business was Frank Reimer who did things

in such a big way he earned the nickname "Carload Frank".

His story is truly one of rags to riches and it starts in Giroux. People who used to drive their buggies into this little village some 52 years ago never paid much attention to one very ordinary-looking barefoot boy who used to tote groceries around the general store. Barefoot boys were as common as wagon wheels in those days and families were large and incomes small. The keeper of the Giroux general store in those years was Peter B. Reimer and he had 12 other children, all just as barefooted as little Frank and so no one paid much attention to him.

Perhaps if they would have known that less than 40 years later he would be a millionaire whose name would be widely known in the business world, they would have stopped to look twice as he carried groceries around the store. But since no one could foretell the future, the little boy went unnoticed.

But he didn't go unnoticed for long. On December 9, 1943 a fire totally destroyed the Reimer store at Steinbach and a closed corporation called P. B. Reimer & Sons was formed with a new store and Frank Reimer as managing director.

During these years he became widely known as "Carload Frank". This name derived from his practice of buying everything by the carload and passing on the profits from this volume buying to the customers. The popularity of this practice with the customers was reflected in the rising tide of prosperity which floated P. B. Reimer & Sons to a place of wide renown. People began to come for miles, even from Winnipeg, to buy groceries, something unheard of in earlier days. At that time there were few if any grocery stores outside of the larger cities which ever bought things by the carload. "Why I even remember buying a carload of jam," Mr. Reimer recalled in later years. "I still have the invoice to prove it."

Despite his reputation for carload merchandising and for attracting bargain-seeking customers to his store, it wasn't until 1950 that Mr. Reimer took the step which made him one of the bigger business barons of western Canada. That was the year that Frank and his son Don became convinced that if they could save as much money as they

did by trucking groceries for their own store, they could earn a great deal more by trucking for other people. They bought a license to operate in Manitoba and Ontario and opened an office and warehouse in Winnipeg.

Though no longer solely owned by the family, Reimer Express Lines became the largest independent trucking organization in western Canada.

Pictures from the past



This is probably one of the oldest photographs ever taken in Steinbach still in existence. It was taken around 1897 at the Heinrich Wiebe residence by Peter H. Guenther, local cheesemaker. Not all the people can be identified. In the back row, second from left, is Heinrich Wiebe; fourth is Abram Friesen and sixth is Helena Reimer, daughter of the local merchant Klaas Reimer. At extreme right is a German immigrant couple living in Steinbach at that time.

In the middle row the following can be identified: Mrs. Heinrich Wiebe, extreme left, Klaas R. Toews, third from left and Mrs. P. H. Guenther (holding well-known local former teacher P. S. Guenther) fifth from left.

Sitting in the front row, second from right is Barkman and lying in the front, at right, is Johann Wiebe.

—photo courtesy Mrs George Goossen



Steinbach young people, around 1914. Back row: Jacob H. W. Reimer, Jacob A. Reimer, K. R. Barkman, C. F. Barkman, Abram Fast, John P. Friesen, C. T. Kroecker, Simon Sobering and George D. Goossen.

Middle row: (most of these girls were not married at the time this picture was taken but married names are often given for easier identification) Mrs. P. B. Reimer, Mrs. Groening, Miss Agnes Reimer, Mrs. J. S. Rempel, Mrs. John F. Giesbrecht, Mrs. Peter T. Toews, Mrs. John Friesen, Mrs. George G. Goossen.

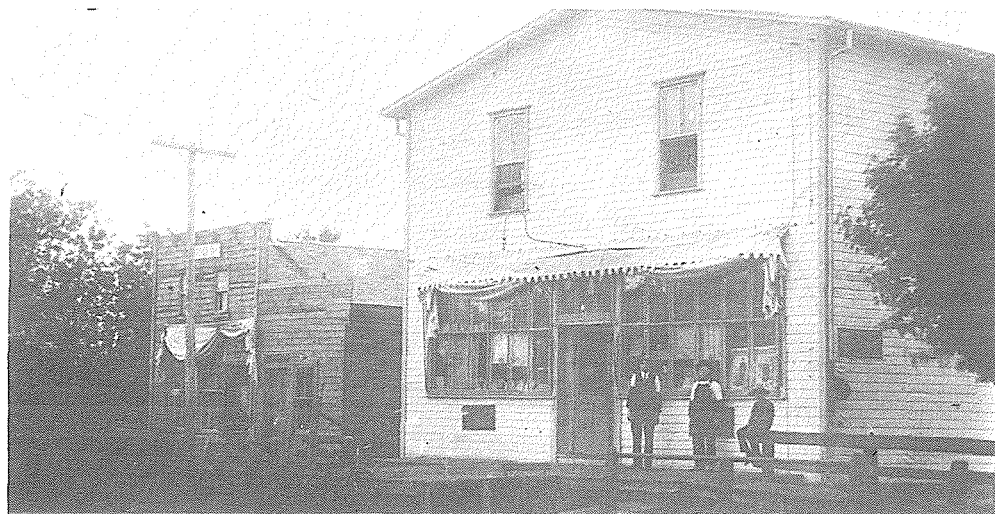
Front row: Mrs. Henry T. Reimer, Mrs. C. T. Loewen, Isaac T. Loewen, Peter S. Rempel, Miss Elizabeth Friesen, Mrs. C. K. Friesen and Mrs. Margaret Woodward (nee Margaret Guenther).

—photo courtesy John D. Barkman



Steinbach's young ladies were as pretty at the turn of the century as they are today. Seated in front are Mrs. Diedrich F. Giesbrecht, Mrs. Henry L. Toews and Anna H. W. Reimer. In the back are Maria Friesen (later Mrs. Starfield), Mrs. John R. Toews, Mrs. Ben P. Janz, Mrs. Jac. F. Giesbrecht, Mrs. Peter B. Reimer, Mrs. Jac. L. Toews and Mrs. Jacob D. Barkman.

—photo courtesy John D. Barkman



This store was founded by Steinbach's first merchant Klaas Reimer who was later joined in partnership by Jacob W. Reimer and Peter T. Barkman. The store was first called K. Reimer and Sons but later it was known as Central Store, Steinbach Produce and Marshall Wells.

P. B. Janz was manager of this store for many years and this was where the youngsters in town would bring their big pennies. Mr. Janz gave them more for their money than any other clerk in town and what he may have lost in profits he gained in sweet memories to this day, according to retired school teacher P. S. Guenther.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio



A city photographer came to Steinbach around 1900 and snapped this photograph of a group of the community's young men. Standing in the back row are Jac. J. Barkman, Cornelius T. Loewen, Henry Toews, Isaac Reimer and Klaas D. Reimer. Centre row: C. F. Friesen, Peter X. Friesen, Ben Reimer, Jac. F. Barkman and K. R. Toews. Lying in front are Peter C. Toews and J. R. Friesen.

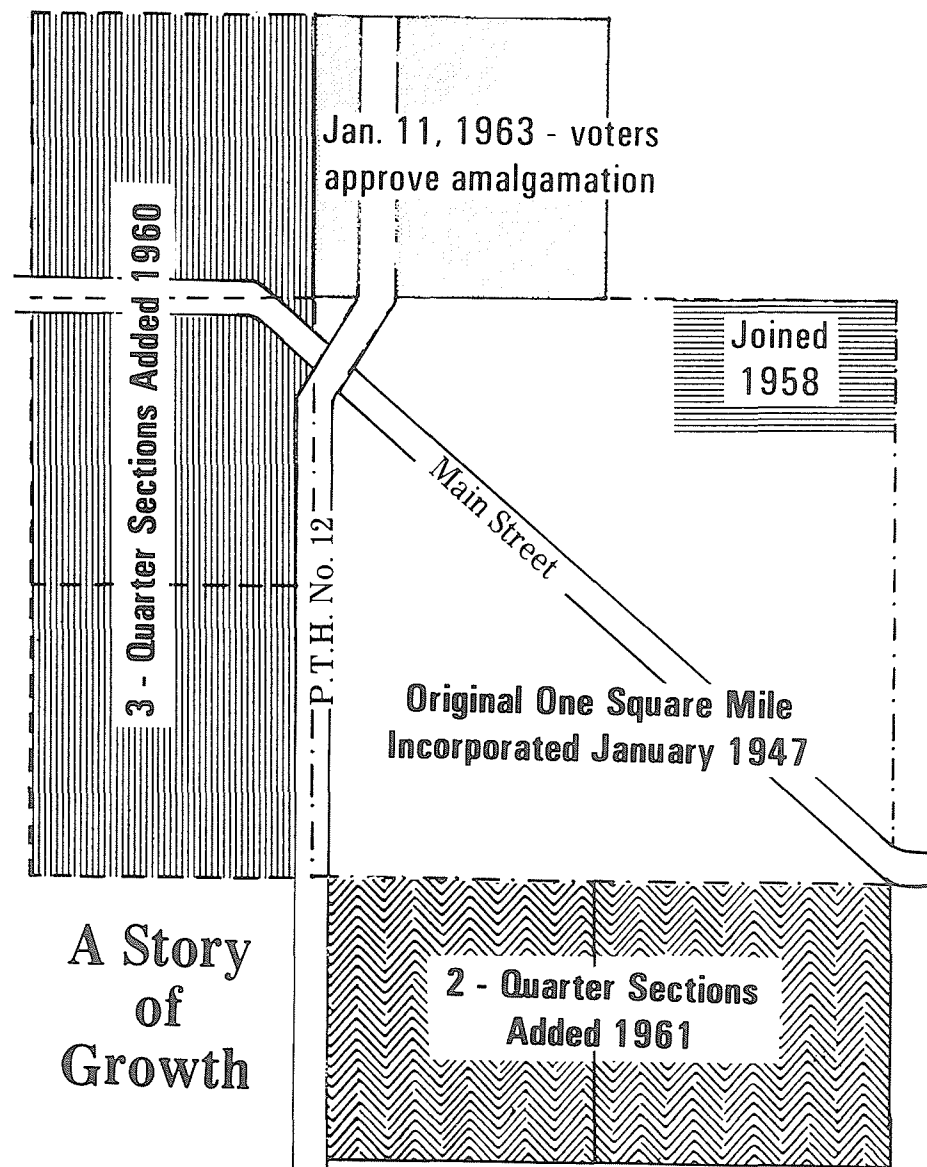
—photo courtesy Ed. J. Friesen

Town of Steinbach statistics

The illustration on this page shows the original square mile which comprised the town of Steinbach when it was incorporated as a town on Jan. 1, 1947. At this date it comprised of exactly one section less 40 acres in the northeast corner. At that time the proponents of incorporation thought that the 40 acres of farmland might do more harm than good for the corpor-

ation and it was only in 1958, when the area was bought for a housing project, that it was annexed.

The largest annexation took place Jan. 1, 1960 when some 500 acres of land along the west boundary of the town were incorporated. The amalgamation was made on the request of residents living in this former "suburb". They



made one petition to the municipality asking to be released from that corporation and another to the town to take them in.

The necessary negotiations between town and municipality, and the special act of legislature to approve the transaction, were all made in 1959.

The new area comprised some 500 acres with a 1959 assessment of around \$200,000. This was prior to the completion of two new large factories — C. T. Loewen's and Barkman Concrete Products. When these were completed the assessment rose another \$400,000.

The assessment of the town at this time stood at \$3,500,000. With the addition of the new territory, plus the addition of the 1959 construction, total of the greater Steinbach area reached to \$5,000,000.

In 1962 the residents of the two quarters on the southern boundary voted to join the town but the transfer of this from the municipality to the town was not approved until 1963.

The last annexation came on January 11, 1963 when residents of the southwest quarter of Section 2-7-6, an area which adjoins north Townline Road, voted in favor of joining the town. The vote was 52 for and 19 against.

At the time of incorporation the assessment of the town was \$705,000. There were no paved streets and few sidewalks.

At the time of the last addition, in 1963, the town boasted 7.8 miles of concrete sidewalk and half a mile of asphalt sidewalk; 22 miles of water and sewer main; 126 fire hydrants; 7.6 miles paved streets and 8.6 miles of street with curbing.

The assessment of the town on Jan. 1, 1963 stood at \$4,750,000 which was more than six times the original amount.

Against all this the town had an indebtedness of \$5,000 on the nurses' residence and \$611,000 on the waterworks system. When the waterworks system was first started in 1956 the total cost was \$520,000 or a per capita debt of \$193.84. By 1963, with the system more than twice the original size, the debenture debt stood at \$616,000, a per capita debt of \$164.67.

Over 1,000 people were employed in Steinbach's 75 business establishments in 1960. This figure did not include self-employed persons such as barbers and medical officials and employees of trucking and carpentry firms.

Of the 1,078 heads counted in this survey, 72

were classified as having managerial positions. In addition, there were 598 male employees and 408 females. Only a few employed part-time help. Less than two dozen were counted in this category in the 75 firms contacted.

By far the largest employer of male labor was the C. T. Loewen firm, which had on its payroll 95 men and 10 females in addition to a managerial staff of three in their store and factory. The largest employer of female help was Steinbach Apparel with 150 women and 11 men on staff. Garages too, were a big employer of labor. The four largest garages in town employed 137 men and 10 women. The second largest single employer of male labor was Barkman Hardware, manufacturers of concrete products. They employed 53 men and three women. This did not include their Winnipeg staff of 25, engaged in sales and installation work.

Building permit values reached an all-time high in 1969 of \$1,034,344. The next year, 1970, the town's total assessment was \$8,352,000. Total retail in Steinbach exceeded \$26 million in 1969 and the community was serving a trading area of 30,000 people.

By 1970 Steinbach boasted 150 retail outlets, some of them among the most modern in the province.

Population

(Some dates estimated)

1874 - 100
1889 - 265
1905 - 450
1910 - 500
1936 - 980
1944 - 1,800
1951 - 2,155
1956 - 2,676
1961 - 3,739
1969 - 5,000

A pre-census report in August, 1961 showed Steinbach had gained nearly 1,000 population from 1956 to 1961 and was one of the most rapid growing towns in the province.

In April, 1969 the Targets for Economic Development Commission identified Steinbach as having the highest growth rate (percentage wise) of all Manitoba communities lying outside major urban areas.

According to the report, Steinbach grew by

STEINBACH

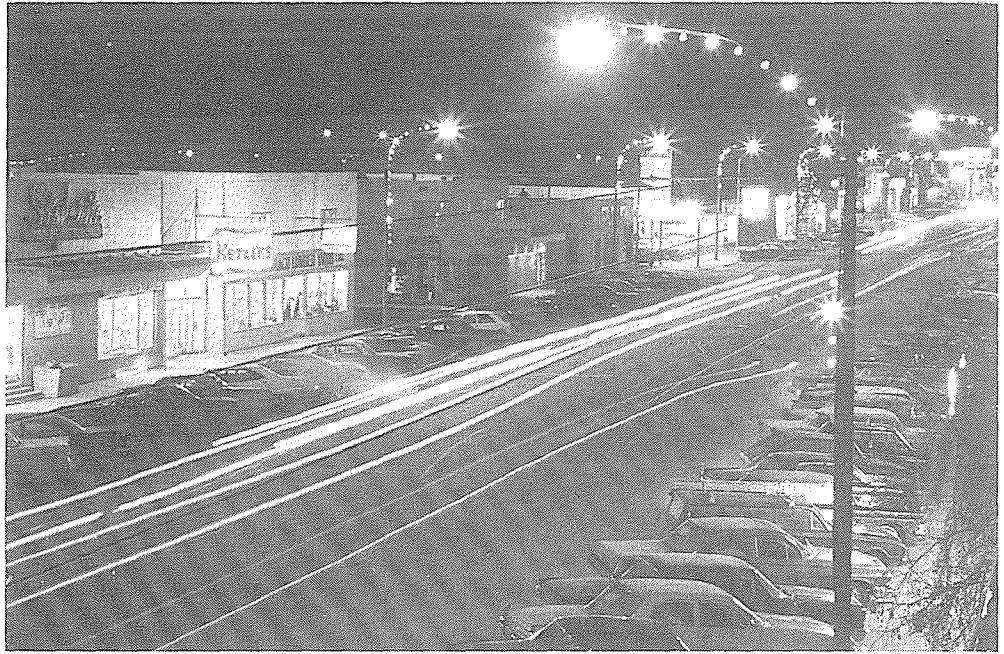
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115.7 percent in the period from 1951-1966. Growth rate from 1961-1966 was 24.3 percent. Annexation of land within the town limits was partly attributable to the high growth rate but town officials pointed out that an expansion of this nature also represented growth.

The Commission identified Manitoba's 20

fastest-growing centres outside major urban areas as those communities having:

- * A high growth between 1951 and 1966.
- * No population loss between 1961 and 1966.
- * No decline in the critical 20-64 age group between 1951 and 1966.



Steinbach Main Street, Dec. 16, 1968.

—Cairlon News photo

Prominent or colorful personalities

It takes all kinds of people to build a community. Some made their mark by steady progress over many years in their specific field of endeavor; others are remembered by their singular achievements or colorful personalities.

Steinbach's recent history, as much as its early history, was made by scores of men and women who were outstanding in one way or another. Many are mentioned in other chapters of this book but the exciting stories of some would probably be forgotten entirely if it weren't for this chapter.

The stories related here are representative. Not everyone who made his mark in the community can be mentioned. Following are but a few of the colorful or outstanding personalities that have helped make Steinbach what it is today.

"C.T." left deep mark on Steinbach

"There are new opportunities for business and industry every day" C.T. Loewen, veteran businessman used to say, "but it takes a lot of stamina and courage to start on something you're not sure of. That's why a young man will rather stick to a job than to venture out into something where there is no guarantee of security."

C. T. Loewen (1883-1960) was the oldest of five brothers who have left their mark on the town of Steinbach in no uncertain manner. A. T. Loewen owned and operated the funeral parlour; Jac. T. Loewen (and sons) became a moving contractor and enjoyed province-wide recognition as master of his trade; I. T. Loewen founded a flourishing auto body shop which is being carried on by his son Albert; P. T. Loewen, who operated Loewen Garage and C. T. Loewen, who probably because he was the oldest, founded the

biggest enterprise of them all, C. T. Loewen and Sons, consisting of a lumberyard and manufacturing concern.

The Loewen boys were raised in the usual pioneer family tradition. After a few years of elementary school education, they were considered to be an asset to the farm and to keep them busy and out of mischief, their father purchased a saw rig and a threshing machine. Son Cornelius took a great interest in the sawmill, especially when it meant going into the woods for winter. It was an interest that he maintained during his life and that influenced him when starting a business of his own.

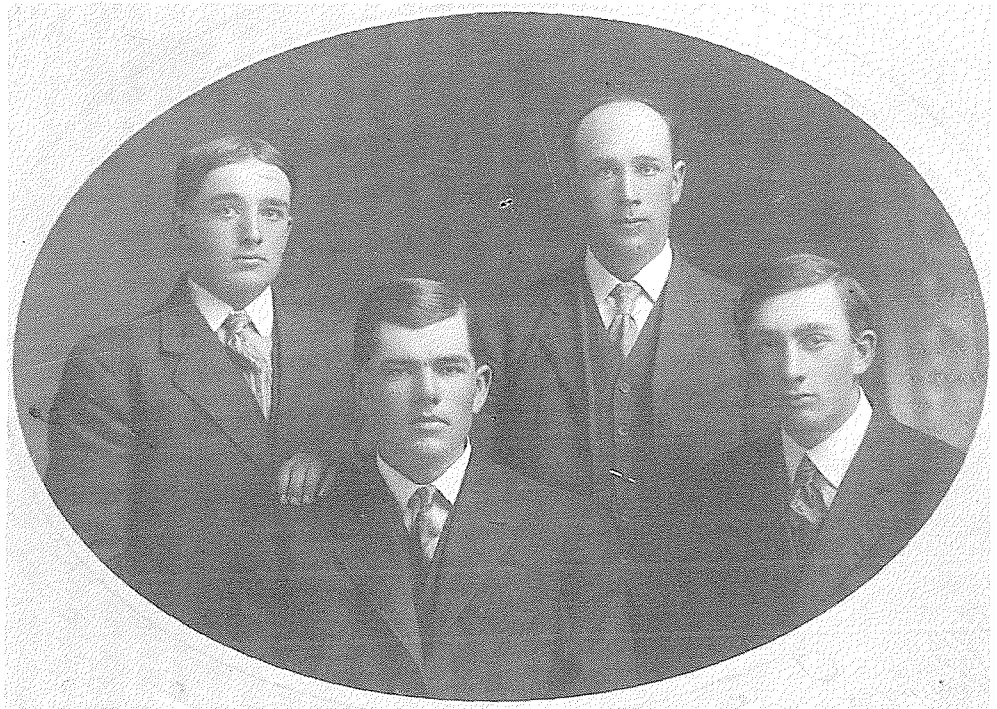
Mr. Loewen's most notable accomplishments were, of course, in the business realm. Beginning with his father's sawing rig, he went into the bush east of town to cut logs. Never content until he had exhausted all the possibilities of everything he set his hand to, he began selling the lumber as well as cutting it. Later he went into the manufacture of window sash, beekeeping supplies, church pews, doors for the building trade, and of course into the building of houses and buildings of all kinds.

On the side he assisted his brother Jac. to start a house-moving business which became known province wide, and another brother Peter to take over a garage and General Motors agency.

A man of phenomenal energy, unlimited vision and irrepressible drive, he built the huge firm that bears his name from a little one-horse logging outfit.

Known simply as "C. T." to thousands of people, his name became almost synonymous with Steinbach. People in every walk of life from farmers who bought a pound of nails to millionaire building magnates who bought his window sash, counted him as a personal acquaintance and friend.

And his accomplishments in other fields



An old photograph showing three well known sons of Cornelius B. Loewen. Standing in the back are P. T. Loewen, left, and C. T. Loewen, right. Frank Kroeker, a friend of the Loewen's, is at left front and A. T. Loewen is at right.

—photo courtesy Ed Loewen

besides business were outstanding as well.

C. T. Loewen headed the first telephone system that Steinbach ever had, a system which continued to serve the community until 1959. He was head of the fire brigade for many years and served on the town board for 12 to 15 years. He was personally responsible for the building of the first board sidewalk the town ever had. Moreover he was known for a genuinely sympathetic and understanding heart and never turned away a man seeking employment if the man were genuinely in need of assistance. He was a lifelong member of the Evangelical Mennonite Church.

The late Mr. Loewen was married to the former Helen Friesen of Steinbach on May 31, 1914 and she predeceased him in 1949. He was the father of 13 children, six of which died in infancy. He suffered a crippling stroke in Dec., 1951 which put an end to his tremendous activity. He passed away at the age of 77 in Oct., 1960.

T. G. Smith, minister of Steinbach finance

In the 1950's the Steinbach branch of the Royal Bank of Canada became known in the provincial head office in Winnipeg as "the branch that astonished the experts." Just 12 years previous, in 1945, it had been regarded as "another of those backwood points" but by 1957 it had become one of the senior branches in Manitoba.

Perhaps less known, but no less astonishing than the Steinbach branch itself was its manager, "Tommy" G. Smith, now retired in Winnipeg. Tommy was a rare combination of small town country boy and big business executive during his many years here. His manner, air, speech and beliefs altered little since he entered the small bank back in his old home town of Killarney in 1927. His appearance, apart from a disarming grin, and his record of business achievement, better



At the testimonial dinner for T. G. Smith Oct. 22, 1968, prior to Mr. Smith's leaving Steinbach. Left to right are Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Barkman, T. G. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Penner, Mrs. Smith, and Mr. and Mrs. Jim Steenson.

—Carillon News photo

befitted the accomplished executive in the business world, which he was.

Whether he was negotiating a \$50,000 loan with a big firm, or trying to help a 4-H "clubber" buy a calf, "T. G." discussed the deal with air of an old dad giving one of his boys sound advice.

Although of English Canadian extraction himself, he found himself equally at home with people of other racial origins. This propensity for hitting it off with everyone stemmed from several years he lived at the Clarendon Hotel in Winnipeg previous to his marriage. "I was brought up," he once said remembering back, "in a town where just about everyone was of Anglo-Saxon origin but there in the heart of Winnipeg I became fast friends with people of just about every race on earth."

When manager Smith arrived in Steinbach in 1945, the local branch had just three employees. Then began the big postwar boom, big in some localities but phenomenal in Steinbach. "The town was full of businessmen, just waiting to do the things they'd been saving up for years to do," recalled Mr. Smith

modestly in later years. "So it was comparatively easy to build a successful banking business. I am happy to say that we have been able to go along with many businesses whose tremendous success over the past few years is now history."

Mr. Smith played a role in the development of some pretty good-sized business ventures. "I remember," he recalled, "John Penner coming in here with an idea for converting steel-wheeled tractors to rubber. I thought, and told him quite frankly so, that it wouldn't last long, if it worked at all. He started out modestly and it worked. Right there began the \$2 million Penner Tire and Rubber Co. Then there was Reimer Express and Abe Penner and a lot of others. You can do things with fellows like those."

Once asked how Steinbach people compared with other localities for borrowing habits, Mr. Smith replied with a typical thrust of humor: "Well, the people of Steinbach are prone to borrow rather heavily. My claim is that they don't spend all day on Sunday going to church. They spend part of it thinking up ideas to

present to the bank manager on Monday morning."

Tough beginning

Mr. Smith's father was of United Empire Loyalist stock and he migrated from Nova Scotia to Manitoba around the turn of the century. He was killed in one of the first, if not the first, tractor accidents in the province's history when Tommy was only four. His mother struggled hard and put all her five children through high school. Tommy and his brother both became bank managers and his three sisters, school teachers.

Young Smith went to work in the bank when he was 17, but spent almost as much time participating in his two favorite sports, baseball and hockey, as he did at work. His heroes were Babe Ruth and Eddie Shore. When he was 21, however, one of his legs was so seriously injured in a baseball game that it had to be amputated. His interest in sports never faltered however, and Mr. Smith became the founder of Little League baseball in Steinbach.

Beef club founder

Although T. G. Smith is too modest to ever say so himself, Jake Penner, original president of the Hanover 4-H Beef Club has stated: "If it hadn't been for Tommy, I can definitely say without hesitation that there would never have been any Hanover 4-H Beef Club. He was the man who undertook to finance our start at a very small rate. He travelled around to all the schools and helped us organize. He stuck his neck out by financing us because if the clubs had fallen through he would have had to foot the bill himself."

Mr. Smith was also responsible for the successful 4-H Beef Club sale at the Hanover Agricultural fairs and helped a great deal in improving the Agricultural Society. He was also active in the chamber of commerce for some years.

On October 22, 1968 the man who first came

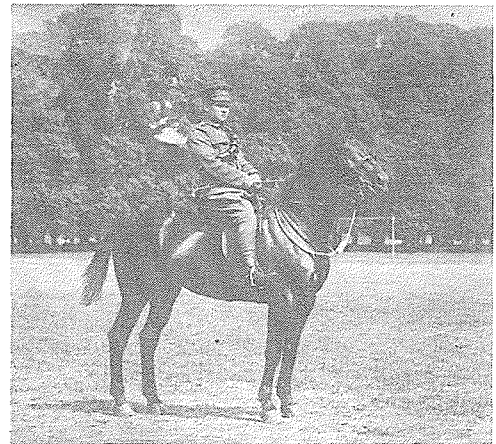
to Steinbach as a relief manager for the Royal Bank of Canada at Steinbach was honored at one of the most successful banquets ever held by the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce. Following this he retired in Winnipeg.

"Fighting George" helped make military history

Appearances can sometimes be deceiving. Everybody knows that. But few folks in Steinbach know, or even guess, that the mild-mannered, unpretentious-looking individual is anything but a one-time farmer who decided to try his hand at operating a transfer.

George Coleman, the man in question, is certainly that all right. But he still serves so well to verify the old saying that appearances are deceptive. If Mr. Coleman looked more like a British Regimental Sergeant Major, he would certainly be more in character for the real story of his life reads like something from the pen of Rudyard Kipling, only more so.

Cavalryman, pilot, a driver of tanks, armoured cars, and camels, include some of the occupations at which Mr. Coleman has tried his hand. As a soldier in the desert sands of Egypt



Private G. T. Coleman at age 17, when he joined the Shropshire Yeomanry in the British cavalry in 1914. Mr. Coleman participated in the last cavalry charge in World War 1 in early 1915 in Palestine.

—photo courtesy George Coleman

and Palestine, sometimes over the very ground once trodden by the children of Israel and by Christ himself, he participated in some of the last cavalry charges in history.

He was the first British soldier ever to drive a tank in Egypt and drove an armoured car under the personal command of the Duke of Westminster. As versatile as any Englishman of Kipling's tales, George transferred to the famous Camel Patrol where he piloted a "ship of the desert," as those animals have been known for centuries. At the second battle of Gaza he was sergeant in charge of a transport company consisting of 500 camels.

Then, in 1916, forever itching for some new adventure, Coleman applied for and received a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps, forerunner of the modern Royal Air Force. Here he found even more adventure than he had bargained for. He survived a number of aerial dogfights with hostile aircraft, shooting down two of them and a possible third, and experiencing in turn a number of close brushes with death. On one occasion when he landed he found that a bullet had penetrated one of the layers of a silver cigarette case which he carried in his left breast pocket. The bullet was still inside the case. With a sigh of thankfulness he realized that the bullet might just as easily have penetrated his heart. He still has the case as a souvenir.

Was a friend of "Lawrence of Arabia"

In his capacity as pilot in the R.F.C., as the corps was known, George became a personal friend of the famous Col. T. E. "Lawrence of Arabia". On a number of occasions he flew that colourful leader of the Arabs to points far behind the enemy lines where he carried on operations with the Bedoin desert chieftains.

Here, too, in the R.F.C. he met and hob-nobbed with "Billy" Bishop, the Canadian who became the greatest Allied air ace of World War I. He also met Squadron Commander Tedder, who in World War II commanded the Tactical Air Force under General Eisenhower in Europe. He remembers Bishop as a "daredevil".



After most of the British cavalry was disbanded in 1915 George Coleman joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1915. His first solo flight in an airfield near Alexandria, Egypt, ended this way but Mr. Coleman wasn't hurt and in six weeks he was flying over enemy lines. Mr. Coleman flew a variety of fighter planes including Sopwith Pups, Camels and Newports. The plane in the photo above was an Avro trainer. Never wounded, Mr. Coleman saw action in many different areas and in different times drove a tank, armoured car, camel, horse and plane.

—photo courtesy George Coleman

George's adventurous career began shortly after he was born in 1898. His father owned a large number of horses. "I learned to ride almost before I could walk," he says. It seemed only natural to him, when war broke out in 1914, to join a cavalry unit, the Shropshire Yeomanry.

With his unit, he went to Egypt. In a number of fierce encounters, the Yeomanry, in company with the Bengal Lancers and some Australian cavalry units, charged the Turkish positions armed only with cavalry lances, sabers, and short carbines. Luckier than many, George survived to tell the tale and pass through more exciting experiences.

The planes in which Coleman learned to fly at Alexandria and Cairo would be considered unsafe today. They resembled packing crates held together with baling wire. However, George says, "we never even heard of parachutes in those days. Newports, Sopwith Camels, and Bristol Fighters are some of the air-

craft we used. They carried one Lewis and one Vickers machine gun each, the latter synchronized to fire through the propeller." Mr. Coleman held the rank of Flight Lieutenant at the close of World War I, having risen through the ranks. In 1920 he married Miss Frances Hawley of Derby, England.

Still suffering from itchy feet after the war, George stayed on in England for a while, riding steeple chase horses for a living. Then in 1925 he came to Canada with his wife, purchasing a quarter section of land at Petersville, Manitoba. "Being a greenhorn," he says, "I was taken in. Only a few acres were broken and the rest was bush."

However, the Colemans stayed on there until 1929. They then moved to Woodlands and bought a quarter of excellent land there, where they remained until 1948, leaving to come to Steinbach in that year. They'd be there still, George says, except that his son Seton had hay fever so badly that he could not remain on the farm. They saw the South East Transfer advertised for sale in a paper and came down and bought it.

During the Second World War, Mr. Coleman enlisted in the R.C.E.M.E. where he was given the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major and served throughout the war.

Steinbach's New York banker

One fall day in 1906, a thin, 14-year-old boy said goodbye to his parents, the John I. Friesens in front of their home in the little village of Steinbach. He climbed into a democrat that was waiting nearby with several young fellows about his own age and began the journey which would take him to high school at Gretna, Man.

The boy's name was John P. Friesen and that trip to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna was his first away from home. He didn't know it then but he was starting on a career which would lead him ultimately to one of the more important banking positions on Wall Street in New York, the commercial cross-roads of the world.

John P. Friesen was born Dec. 20, 1892 in his parents' home in Steinbach in one of the build-



John P. Friesen.

ings then in style—a house and barn built together. After he became a New York banker, he took delight in telling his broker friends that he was born in a barn.

At the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, John's teachers discovered that he was no slouch, especially at figures and when he left the Institute in 1911, after three years, they recommended him for a job at the Gretna branch of the Bank of Montreal which he accepted.

In the spring of 1913, the bank at Gretna caught fire and burned to the ground. Fortunately, everything of value was locked in the fireproof vault but the heat of the fire had warped the steel on the outside of the vault and an expert had to be called down from Winnipeg to cut a hole through it.

John and the town constable, a Mr. Funk, had to sleep in the vault for the first two nights after the fire as guards. During the second night they heard someone prowling around outside and drew their guns to fight it out with the supposed burglar. When they switched on their flashlight, the beam shone right into the face of a black cat which had been tramping

around on a piece of tin roofing outside the vault. The guards looked at each other sheepishly then burst out laughing so hard they had to sit down till they got over it.

Following the fire, John was moved to Altona and from then on he held jobs of gradually-increasing importance at various Bank of Montreal branches right up until 1924. He worked at Raymond, Alta., Saskatoon, Regina, Tavistock, Ont., Waterford, Ont., and Oshawa, Ont. From Oshawa the bank sent him to its New York branch where he stayed on until his retirement in 1954.

Supervised Loans for Millions of Dollars

As the bank's joint call-loan manager in the big metropolis, he supervised the issue of loans for about \$20,000,000 a day. Most of it went to Wall Street brokerage firms. It was quite common, he said, to have a broker call up and ask for a loan of one million or even five million dollars.

Mr. Friesen said his branch never lost a cent in the 1929 stock market crash "but we had our headaches". He says, too, that there is no truth in those stories about the deluge of brokers' bodies supposed to have rained down on Wall Street from their office windows during the crash of 1929. "I only knew two or three who did that."

Because of his position, John met many interesting and famous people. Among them were George Bernard Shaw and the notorious "Match King Kruger," the international confidence man. The latter ended his life by committing suicide in a Paris hotel after swindling millions of dollars in the United States, fortunately none of it from Mr. Friesen's bank.

About the most interesting persons he ever met he says, was a poet who became a millionaire and later lost his money in one day. This particular poet lived in a rather poverty-stricken life in the city of Pittsburgh and spent his spare time making up rhymes. One day while crossing a bridge, he saw a boy fall into the river. Without a thought, the poet threw off his coat, dived in and rescued the lad. He discovered that he had rescued the son of a

Pittsburgh steel magnate who died sometime after leaving to his son's rescuer a bequest of \$250,000. The poet turned this sum over to the Wall Street brokers who, through speculation, built it up to a million dollar fortune for him. That was in the 1920's. When the crash came in 1929, the poet lost everything. Far from jumping out a window, he took it all very philosophically and went back to making up rhymes again.

Remained a bachelor

Mr. Friesen has remained a bachelor all his life. "Not purposely," he says, "just coincidence." Asked in 1958 following his retirement what he thought about the future of our economy, Mr. Friesen said: "I'm an optimist. We cannot afford to have a depression. The last depression was only an artificial one. The banks were not broke; their assets were just frozen. Our governments will go out of their way to see that we don't run into that situation again."

Mr. Friesen, by the way, claims he is related to almost everyone in Steinbach, and when he starts listing his relatives here, one is inclined to agree. His nearest relatives in Steinbach were his four sisters, Mrs. George W. Reimer, Mrs. P. B. Reimer, Mrs. A. A. Reimer, and Miss Elizabeth Friesen. A fifth sister, Mrs. Peter G. Rempel, lives in Fairbairn, Nebraska.

His only brother, Dr. Abram P. Friesen, who was a famous American physicist, was listed in the American Who's Who in 1952-53. He taught physics in several large universities in Colorado and Texas. When he died on July 31, 1957, the New York Times carried a half column obituary.

Mr. Friesen is a close friend of K. R. Barkman with whom he attended school and a first cousin of Frank Friesen of the C. T. Loewen Lumber Co. Of the rest of his relatives in the Southeast he says, "There are so many I couldn't count them all."

At the time of publication of this book Mr. Friesen is residing in Winnipeg.

Last of the pioneers — John B. Toews

One of the last of the original Mennonite pioneers of Manitoba marked his centennial birthday Tuesday, March 30, 1965.

Numbering his living descendents at about 300, John B. Toews of the Greenland Home north of Steinbach, looked back on a century of history that was all a part of his own lifetime.

As a boy of nine years he stepped off a Red River paddle-wheel steamer near the present site of Niverville in August, 1874 with the first Mennonite immigrants to land here from Russia.

Mr Toews helped his parents and their neighbors carve the first homes out of what was then a mosquito-infested wilderness. He taught school in three of those first Mennonite villages and later went on to become one of the best known men in the Mennonite communities east of the Red River.

He celebrated his 100th birthday in 1965 by attending a gathering that was held in his

honor at Steinbach. The following Sunday, April 4 he was honored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television station in Winnipeg which presented a short feature on his life history.

For most of his life, Mr. Toews was a farmer, but he also taught school and served as editor of the German language **Botschafter der Wahrheit** (Messenger of Truth), the official paper of the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite).

He was one of the first Mennonite settlers to learn English and this accounts for his having been chosen in the early years as a school teacher.

Mr. Toews spent his last years in the Greenland Home. He died in 1967 at the age of 102.

They made history by teaching school

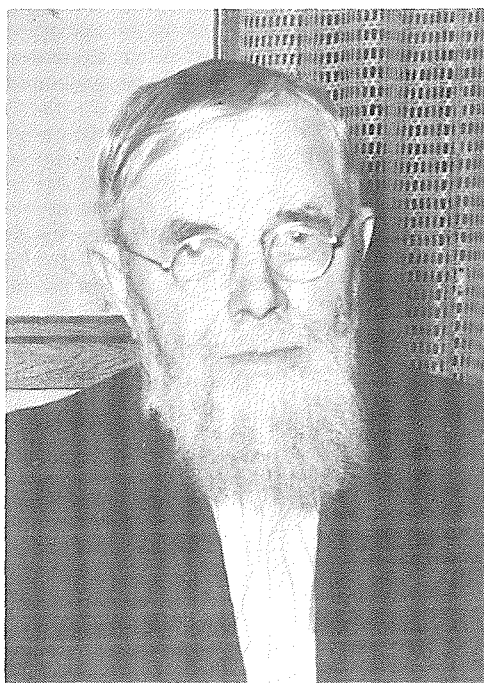
In April, 1964 the Steinbach school board announced that it would transfer the name "Kornelsen" from the soon-to-be-demolished 1913 building to the 1936 model Central School.

In doing so the board paid its respects to the Kornelsen family whose name is synonymous with the history of education in Steinbach.

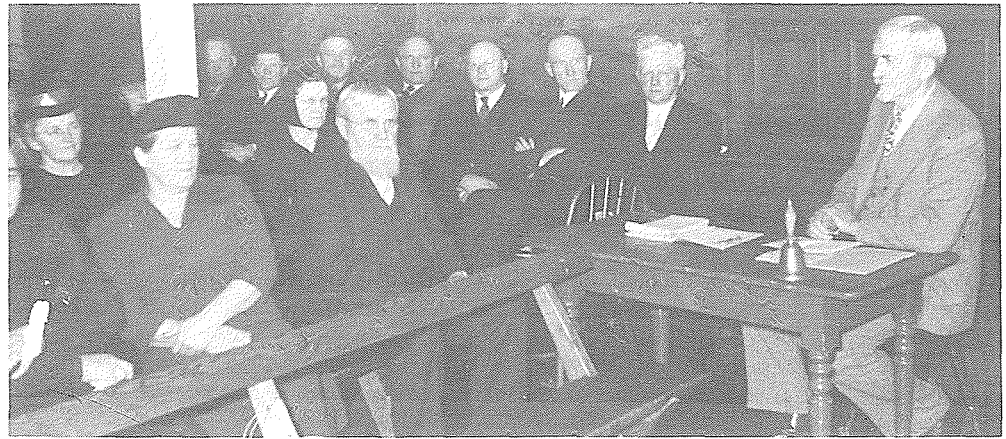
The Kornelsen family holds the unequalled honor of having taught, in three generations, a cumulative total of 155 years between 1876 and the present, 106 of them in the town of Steinbach.

The record of the Kornsens as teachers began in the fall of 1876 when Gerhard E. Kornelsen, then nineteen years old, was hired to teach in the Steinbach village school. His salary consisted of \$7 per month and free board and lodging.

As a supplement to this stipend, the villagers broke five acres for him on his homestead three miles south of town. He was to be boarded with the parents of his pupils and the number of days he stayed with each family was determined by the number of pupils that family had in school. School was



John B. Toews.



G. G. Kornelson at a class reunion with some of his former students at Kornelsen School. The row next to the wall starting at the piano include John C. Reimer, K. R. Barkman, George K. Reimer, Henry D. Fast (not a student of Mr. Kornelsen's but his wife was). In the foreground is John B. Toews whose daughter was a student of Mr. Kornelsen's. Behind Mr. Toews is Mrs. John D. Bartel and on the left, Mrs. K. R. Barkman. Seated in front is Mrs. H. B. Fast.

—photo by J. D. Barkman

open for only six months of the year during the 1876-77 term. Mr. Kornelsen continued to teach for 33 years in Steinbach.

The second generation of Kornelsen teachers included Gerhard G. Kornelsen who taught for twenty years, fifteen of them in Steinbach

and five in Blumenort; Jacob, who taught for thirty-one years, all of them in Steinbach and William who taught for thirty years, three of them in Steinbach.

The most outstanding record of all belongs in the third generation to Miss Mary Kornel-



Miss Mary Kornelsen



Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Kornelsen

sen, former principal of the old Kornelsen School. In 1970 she had taught 42 years, 33 of them in Steinbach. For her services she was awarded the Coronation Medal by Her Majesty the Queen in 1953. A brother, William, was secretary-treasurer of the Steinbach School District for 24 years.

Rieger Clothing started small

When the smartly designed, modern looking, new Rieger Clothing shop opened on Wednesday, October 1, 1952, it brought back to the family and old friends memories of a winter's day 37 years ago, when the late Sebastian Rieger, founder of the firm, walked from door to door trying to get four co-signers for a hundred dollar promissory note with which he hoped to start a tailoring shop in Steinbach.

The time was 1915, and Mr. Rieger had been laid off at the flour mills. Jobs were scarce and Mr. Rieger, then 31, decided to start a tailor's shop, a trade he had learned in Hungary as a youth. The first step was to get working capital, \$100 of it, and he didn't blame the financier asking for co-signers. The record shows that J. R. Friesen, J. D. Goossen and H. Kreutzer were three of the co-signers.

On March 1, 1915, Mr. Rieger opened shop.

Total receipts for the first month were \$8.60. The record kept by Mr. Rieger shows in detail the work he did. It contains many of the familiar names associated with the early business history of Steinbach: John D. Goossen, H. W. Reimer, C. T. Loewen, A. S. Blatz and others. Charges for work done ranged from 10 cents to \$1.00.

In the second month business tripled as the record shows \$24.70; but in May it slumped back to \$8.80. The total take for the first year was \$196.15.

Things picked up in time, however, and soon Anna, the eldest daughter, quit high school and began helping her father. She was particularly helpful as she liked sewing and could also do the correspondence.



Sebastian Rieger

Repairing clothing and selling second-hand clothes and shoes was the mainstay of the business during the first years but eventually a demand developed for dress suits and so, one day when a peddler came along, Mr. Rieger sold all his second-hand merchandise and started the first men's wear store in southeastern Manitoba.

All the children in turn took their place in the shop. Anna, Sebastian, Simon, Nora, Minna and Henry all did their stint, but all moved into other endeavors except Henry. When Mr. Rieger Sr. passed away in 1949, Sebastian Jr., a teacher, left his profession and together with Henry, formed the partnership today known as Rieger Clothing. The new store with its greatly increased floor space was the result of increased sales during the past years.

Taught 1,807 pupils in forty-one years

Friday afternoon, June 31, 1962 Peter S. Guenther left his grade seven classroom at Elmdale School for the last time as a teacher. For him it marked the end of 41 years teaching during which he administered the essentials of education to a grand total of 1,807 pupils.

As he tidied up his desk, straightened out his books and looked around the classroom for the last time, the veteran teacher paused to reminisce a little. Looking back over his career, he affirmed that if he were a young man just graduating from high school that June and had it to do all over again he'd still be a school teacher. Why? Because he felt there is no satisfaction in life so great as the inner satisfaction that a person derives from the knowledge that he has contributed something lasting and beneficial to the life of someone else.

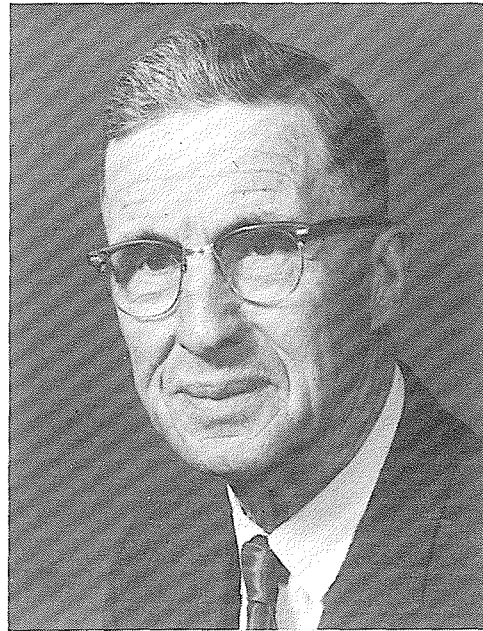
Starting out at Randolph School at Chortitz in the fall of 1920, Mr. Guenther first took up teaching more or less as a matter of earning a little money on a permit-teaching basis. The

people at Randolph liked him, and he liked the job. The second year they boosted his salary to \$110 a month and the following year Mr. Guenther went to Normal School in Winnipeg to become a full-fledged schoolmaster.

Looking back along the 41-year road that represented his life as a teacher, Mr. Guenther can point out many times when he himself learned a valuable lesson while trying to teach others. As he scans the throng of 1,807 upturned young faces, he can see and remember incidents that bring a mist to his eyes. He remembers the time during the war when a tall young Army sergeant stopped him in a store while he was shopping one day. He couldn't even recognize the face but before he had time to enquire, the sergeant introduced him to his wife and said, "This is the teacher that walloped the daylights out of me one time and I had it coming."

Looking back over the years, Mr. Guenther also remembers with pride the gains that were made by the Agricultural Society while he was connected with it for 18 years. There was no agricultural representative in this area at the time and Mr. Guenther, having contact with the Extension Service, acquainted the farmers with the new developments. The first improvement they made was with poultry in bringing about flocks that produced eggs in winter as well as in summer. Eleven improved cattle herds were also established by careful breeding during these years, and the same thing was done with hogs. Mr. Guenther's interest in agriculture also extended to market gardening and together with his sons, they had a large acreage of land in potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables.

Mr. and Mrs. Guenther and their five sons have always been keenly interested in sports, especially in hockey and curling. Mr. Guenther was noted as a hockey player in his younger years and his boys also became proficient in the game. In the years when the boys were still at home, the family would relive all the hockey games at home after the game was over. In more recent years Mr. Guenther has been active in curling.



Peter S. Guenther

**M. M. Penner —
pioneer businessman**

The name of no other man seems to crop up as frequently in the early life of the Steinbach community as that of M. M. Penner.

Born February 7, 1882, the son of Rev. Martin Penner, one of the first Mennonite immigrants to set foot on Canadian soil. Mr. Penner was a pioneer businessman with a powerful personality which caused him to go ahead and defiantly complete a scheme which friends deemed impossible on numerous occasions.

Mr. Penner started out as a farmer in 1901 and three years later married Elizabeth Toews. A move in 1912 took the Penners to B.C. and when they returned, a year later, Mr. Penner, together with his brother John, started a small sash and door factory. In 1918 he bought his brother's share in the business and established Steinbach Lumber Yards which he operated until 1950 when Jonas Friesen took over.

An exceptionally active community member, Mr. Penner left the community and district a number of monuments, the greatest of which was his family of eight sons and two daughters. Cornelius, the oldest, became a farmer and building contractor at Sydney, Man.; Emil, Alfred, Bill and Pete operated the Colenso Lumber Company; Linden, became the owner of Family Shoe Store; Joe is the owner of Penner Electric; George runs an insurance and travel agency in town; Doris is known as Mrs. Henry Ketler and Eva as Mrs. K. T. Kroeker.

Mr. Penner was a councillor of ward 3 in the Hanover Municipality for many years. Ward 3, at that time, included the village of Steinbach. He was the councillor in charge during the construction of the Piney Highway in 1931-32 and could recall vividly in later years the poorly fed men and horses which worked on the tax relief project.

In 1935 or 1936, Mr. Penner led a Chamber of Commerce-sponsored project to build a road which should ultimately connect Stein-

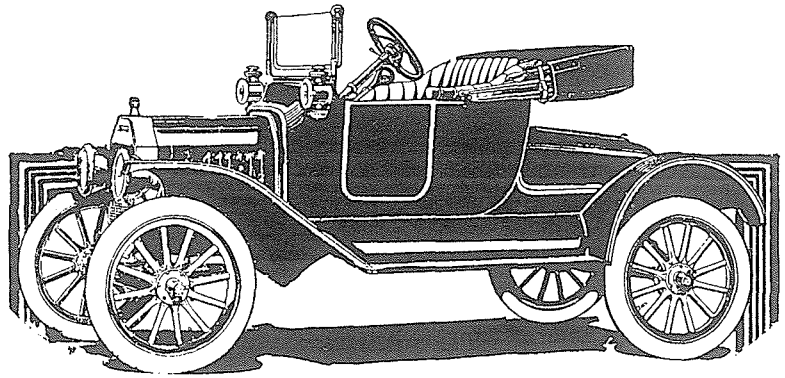


M. M. Penner

bach with Vita. Money was scarce and with the exception of a \$250 grant from the provincial government, all work was voluntary. It was Mr. Penner's job to recruit this voluntary help, needle the province for the stupendous grant of \$250 and finally act as the man in charge of the project. And Mr. Penner also found time to tackle problems closer to home. He deplored the inadequacy of the little plant which was the only claim to "modern" lighting facilities which Steinbach had. Since there was no other way to get better electricity, he settled the matter in characteristic fashion. "I'll build a light plant." Some ridiculed the idea as utterly impossible but in the fall of 1936 the purchase of two diesels was made and by Christmas the power was on. Poles, wiring, transformers, and what not had been set up and the town was provided with alternating current for the first time. The Penner plant, known as the Steinbach Light and Power Co., was in operation until 1943 when it was bought by the Manitoba Power Commission.

Mr Penner passed away at the age of 81 in October, 1963.

Steinbach Post



"MADE IN CANADA"

Preis Touring Car \$ 570 Runabout \$ 520 in Steinbach.

Eine Carladung von **Ford Touring Cars** ist bereits seit dem ersten Februar unterwegs und wird in der Kürze erwartet. Wer im Frühjahr nicht lange warten will, sollte seine Bestellung jetzt machen. Das **1916 Model** ist mit einem elektrischen Horn ausgestattet.

J. R. Friesen, Steinbach, Man.

1916 car prices were a little lower than today's. A touring car sold for \$570 and a Runabout for \$520. This ad states that a carload of Ford touring cars will be arriving shortly and whoever wishes to have immediate spring delivery should put in his order immediately. The 1916 model, the ad states proudly, is equipped with an electric horn.

The car dealers put Steinbach on the map

Though no one, certainly, would have believed it at the time, nothing was destined to change the course of Steinbach's economic history as much as J. R. Friesen's pattering onto Steinbach's Main Street in 1912 with a Model N Ford car.

The son of Abram S. Friesen, a Russian Mennonite immigrant who built a general store in 1890 when "horse power" still wore iron shoes and harness, J. R. Friesen gradually converted the business from general merchandising to farm implements.

A progressive young fellow, "J. R." never overlooked a possibility or a business opportunity. In 1905 a local farmer, C. F. Broesky, built the first automobile in southeastern Manitoba and he serviced it at the Friesen garage. The machine fascinated Mr. Friesen and a few years later, in 1912, he invested in a 1911 Model N, a forerunner of the famous Model T and not to be confused with the 1928 Model A.

The first factory-built car, as may well be imagined, created quite a stir in the community but the stern elders of the Kleine Gemeinde looked askance at this invention. They saw

the automobile as a threat to the concept of the Christian separation from the world and consequently excommunicated Mr. Friesen from the church.

By then Mr. Friesen was so enthusiastic about the way the machine ran, however, he didn't take the rebuke too seriously and the whole matter was finally forgiven when, several years later, some of the ministers who were involved in disciplining Mr. Friesen, came around to buy cars themselves.

In 1914 J. R. Friesen sat down and wrote a letter to Henry Ford asking him to become his dealer in western Canada. The deal was finalized June 6 and Mr. Friesen became the first Ford dealer in Western Canada.

Though P. K. Hiebert is the only name on the record for having bought a car at the garage in 1914, the following people purchased Model T's at the Friesen garage in 1915: P. B. Peters, F. K. Goossen, P. D. Funk, M. Pedé, M. McCaskill, Peter Harder, J. H. W. Reimer, Joe Dufresne, H. Harder, John P. Friesen, A.



J. R. Friesen, first car dealer in Steinbach and probably the first Ford dealer in western Canada.



The J. R. Friesen garage in 1919. Left to right are J. R. Friesen, owner, Jac. E. Regehr, salesman and C. S. Friesen, mechanic with a new Model T. Ford ready for delivery to a customer. In those days new Fords would arrive dismantled in box cars at the Giroux station. They'd be hauled to the garage at Steinbach, assembled and frequently delivered to the customer on a bob sleigh.

S. Blatz, J. H. Buchanan, James Steel, D. Unger, O. Harder, A. Loeppky, John S. Rempel, John Braun, J. Hildebrand, J. D. Goossen and Fred Acres.

The Fords enjoyed virtually a monopoly in the car market during the early days of the Friesen dealership and the garage continued to sell the Model T's with no major modification right up until 1927. Then, with competition becoming stronger, the Ford company discontinued the T model and switched to the Model A which was often called the best car Ford ever built.

Though J. R. Friesen blazed the way, other dealerships soon sprang up in the community. P. T. Barkman, another outstanding local businessman, was the first Chevrolet dealer, starting up a few years after J. R. Friesen, and Peter S. Rempel was the community's third car dealer, selling the Gray Dort line.

H. W. Reimers, who sold everything, also sold Plymouths for a while in the 1920's and Jacob E. Regehr, who'd worked for J. R. Friesen, took up the Chrysler agency in 1931 and Jacob Klippenstein, another salesman groomed by J. R. Friesen, started a Whippet dealership prior to that.

In 1923, P. T. Loewen, with the assistance of his brother C. T. Loewen, acquired the Chevrolet agency from P. T. Barkman.

Car sales soared in the years just prior to the depression and in 1928 to 1929, as many as 70 cars a year were being sold by Steinbach dealers. Interest in automobiles was terrific in those years and by 1925 J. R. Friesen was drawing as many as 400 people for the "Ford Day" where propaganda about the new models was handed out by company officials.

Three years later, in 1928, Loewen Garage was packing them in with (no sound) moving pictures about new Chevrolets in the town hall. (The 1928 Chevrolet Roadster Express sold for \$650 plus tax).

Residents were treated to the first talking movies ever seen in the community by the J. R. Friesen garage on July 21, 1934. There was no admission charge and the movies were: "The Why of the V-8" and "Rhapsody in the Barn".

The depression years were hard on the car dealers but all came through intact. Several dealers even began fox ranching after receiv-



Loewen's Garage in the 1920's. This business was started by P. T. Loewen in 1923 when he, with the help of his brother C. T. Loewen, bought the Chevrolet agency from P. T. Barkman. P. T. Barkman was the first Chevrolet dealer in Steinbach, starting up a few years after J. R. Friesen.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

ing some of these animals in trade for cars but this venture was abandoned in later years. In 1935 and 1936 the dealers made it as easy as possible for people to buy cars and even had a three-day money-back guarantee or five-day free exchange privilege.

A.D.'s first sale was a cream separator

It was also in the early Depression years that a gangling farm boy from Blumenort who wanted to try something a little different from milking cows and feeding pigs came to Steinbach.

His name was A. D. Penner and he finally persuaded J. E. Regehr, who sold cars and appliances, to take him on as a salesman on a commission basis.

"Anytime during those first three months," he admitted in later years, "I would have given anything to have gone back home to the farm but after pulling up stakes and leaving I didn't have the face to go home so soon and so I decided to stick it out a little longer."

That decision to stick it out a little longer undoubtedly saved the day for "A. D." He stayed on to become not only a salesman but perhaps the most eminently successful one that Steinbach has ever had. Though the contro-



This is where Steinbach's car auctions began. Penner Motors ultra modern car lot opened in November, 1955 with an auction sale of 48 used cars and trucks. A vehicle was sold every 4½ minutes and hundreds including Ford Motor Co. officials from Winnipeg came to watch the spectacle of automobiles being sold by public auction. In 1955 the Penner Motors sales lot was said to be the most up to date in western Canada.

—Carillon News photo

versal nature of the man might lead some to dispute this, it seems evident that he led the way for the great garage business boom that changed Steinbach in two decades from a quiet Mennonite country village to the "automobile city", where there were, in later years, perhaps more automobile owners per capita of population than in any other place in Canada.

"A. D.'s" first sale was a Domo cream separator. He sold it for \$39.50 to a Sarto farmer. His first new car was sold to Nap. Lenthier of Lorette for \$985.

After the first three months in the selling doldrums, A. D. found himself and began to develop confidence. From there on his confidence continued to grow until it knew practically no bounds.

By 1937, after only a year as a salesman, he decided with his wife's help to launch out in his own business. Accordingly, he rented a little 20 x 24 foot shed which looked more like a granary than anything else. This build-

ing stood just about in the present location of Reimer's Dress Shoppe. With \$700 savings and the proceeds of 40 acres which he sold for \$18 an acre, Abe opened the first Dodge agency in southeastern Manitoba, the agency which he still operates but on a vastly enlarged scale. The first building served as combined sales-room, office and living quarter for Mr. Penner and his newly-acquired bride. Mrs. Penner took charge of the office and even sold the odd car when Abe wasn't around.

Over the years A. D. Penner tried every stunt known to salesmen and quite a few that were not known until he invented them, in order to sell cars. "We used to ask prospective customers and their families over to our place for supper," he recalled in later years. "After a hefty meal we were usually able to close the deal without arguing or price cuts."

On one occasion "A. D." and his wife called at a prospective customer's farm home to try

and sell a car. While Mr. Penner was driving the couple around to demonstrate the car. Mrs. Penner sat down and milked the cows. When the farmer and his wife got back from the demonstration, the lady of the house was so overwhelmed to find her cows milked that they closed the deal right on the spot. "I haven't milked cows myself," Mr. Penner has said, "but I have done everything else: run a separator, taken care of the kids, pitched sheaves, driven horses and just about anything else you can think of in order to sell a car, and I've found that it worked mighty well."

During 1937, his first year in business for himself, "A. D." sold exactly 22 cars. His first customer was his father, A. R. Penner of Blumenort. The country was just beginning to pull itself out of the depression. Other customers to whom he sold cars that first year in business and which he can still remember were: Joe Gagnault, St. Boniface; Ben L. Reimer; H. H. W. Reimer; Abe D. Loewen, Morris; Lloyd Lindsay, Ridgeville; Peter K. Doerksen, Chortitz; Wiens Bros., Steinbach; John P. Friesen, Niverville; M. M. Penner, Steinbach; Joe Kotchen, South Junction; William Stevenson, Morris; Edmond Dufresne, Ste. Anne; Fred Manaigre, Lorette; John Golowaychuk, Pansy; Walter Yurkowski Sr., Sarto; Ted Chornoboy, Grunthal; Frank Saskosky and John B. Toews, Steinbach.

When the war disrupted the retail business, Mr. Penner kept things going by re-

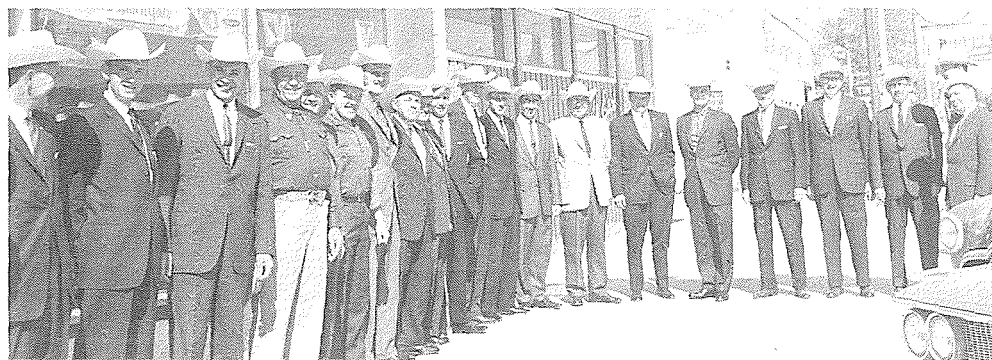
pairing cars and selling implements. In 1941 he took his younger brother John into partnership. Up until then John had worked for him as a salesman. This partnership continued until December 31, 1952. In the meantime the Penner brothers formed the Penner Tire and Rubber Co., which still operates on a national scale, and the Penner Construction Co. When the partnership dissolved, John retained the major interest in the Rubber Co., "A. D." took the road-building outfit and John opened his own Lincoln-Meteor agency and began a strong but friendly competition with his brother.

The record shows that Steinbach's growth as a town pretty well paralleled that of A. D. Penner's business. He was chairman of the Steinbach council when the town was incorporated and was prime signatory to the document of incorporation. 1958 found his enterprise housed in the largest, most modern Dodge agency in Western Canada in a building that covers almost 14,000 square feet of floor space.

Other garages grew as well and new dealerships opened up over the years and by 1955, the many sales promotions and spectaculars were drawing people to Steinbach from distant points as well as Winnipeg.

These were the years where A. D. Penner began his car "give-aways" and instituted the car auctions with brother John. These were later held together with all the car dealers.

Always well organized with flair and precision, the advertising promotions gained



Many of Steinbach's car salesmen and several of the major dealers are in this photo taken for a large sales promotion in the 1950's. Always successful, these promotions brought in car customers from beyond the provincial boundaries and established Steinbach as the "automobile city" of Manitoba.

new customers over the years and led up to the successful "Automobile Extravaganza" in October, 1960.

On this promotion, which began October 15 and lasted till October 29, the customer who came to Steinbach to buy a car, no matter from which dealer he bought it, had his hotel, restaurant, and transportation bills paid for. Dozens of cars were sold and people came from not only Manitoba but from distant points in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Community boasts top salesmen

Over the many years that automobiles have been sold in Steinbach, the community has boasted some of Canada's top salesmen. In 1955, for example, Elvin Fast and George Kehler both won top awards.

Mr. Fast, then a 30-year-old salesman at J. R. Friesen's, was named one of Canada's top Ford salesmen, having averaged 250 sales a year in 1952, 1953 and 1954.

In his many years in sales (he later became sales manager at J. R. Friesen's) Mr. Fast learned never to underestimate the cus-

tomers. In this connection he once recalled an incident where an old pensioner had called at the office and said he was interested in a half-ton truck if the salesman would teach him how to drive it.

The man lived some 50 miles out of town, on very poor roads, and didn't look as though he would be able to pay for it anyway but finally, after the pensioner called again, Mr. Fast went to see him. Not expecting too much, he was surprised when a deal was quickly made and the pensioner went into his shack and came out with a roll of \$100 bills to pay for the truck.

Another salesman, George Kehler, in 1955, won the distinction of being top salesman in the province for his company and one of 12 top men in all of Canada.

A salesman for Penner Motor, he was born on a farm, the youngest of 10 children. Amusingly, one of his brothers recalled when he heard of George's sales awards: "You know, George never was much good at farming. The worst job we could give him was to herd cows. Even at that age he just couldn't stand having no one to talk to."

In more recent years Mr. Kehler became radio station CFAM-CHSM's eastern Manitoba's sales manager.

The board of trade blazed the trail of progress

Steinbach's first board of trade (it was not called chamber of commerce until the spring of 1948) was formed around 1926. In the first years it was not a very active organization and in March, 1929 the general feeling around town was that a new organization should be formed or the present one revamped.

As a result, a meeting was held March 18, 1929 in the Steinbach School with Julius G. Toews as chairman. A committee had already prepared a constitution and this was discussed and then accepted.

Following this there were elections. Elected president was J. D. Loewen, Directors

were N. J. Brandt, J. G. Kornelsen and J. R. Friesen.

The first directors' meeting was held March 20 in J. D. Goossen's office.

Some of the challenges of the first board of trade were recalled in 1962 when the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce honored three of its founding members at the annual banquet.

The three — Martin M. Penner, Julius G. Toews and Peter S. Guenther — were at that time the only surviving members of the community's first board of trade. It was pointed out at the banquet that without the community spirit shown by these men and their colleagues,

Steinbach might have gone the way of so many other small villages in the country.

Martin M. Penner, since deceased, had been on the transportation committee when, in 1929, Steinbach merchants became tired of being bogged down in Manitoba's famous gumbo after every rain and the local chamber of commerce finally bought its own gravel pit, assessed its members and proceeded to gravel the road to Giroux where the nearest railway station was situated.

Farmers along the road were also mobilized and hauled gravel instead of paying money. The venture indebted the chamber of commerce for years but it was a great thing for the town and community. Mr. Penner said he believed this was the biggest venture ever undertaken by the board of trade.

In 1946 Mr. Penner was again appointed to open a trail for the Steinbach businessmen. At this time they wanted a road to connect with the Morden-Sprague highway. Mr. Penner took over and starting at a point 11 miles south of Steinbach, directed the work which involved the filling with corduroy of swamp holes and building a small grade on gravel ridges. With the help of settlers in the area and a minimum amount of money, a road of sorts was fashioned which stood up well until the No. 12 highway came through in 1950.

P. S. Guenther was described as "another trailblazer" for the chamber of commerce. He held the agricultural chairmanship and as such organized the first purebred swine and poultry clubs in the area. It was said that as a result of these clubs, poultry began to lay in winter. His efforts were said to have laid the foundation for making this the egg basket of the province.

Mr. Guenther also looked after placing government-owned, purebred bulls in the area and at one time was responsible for 13 Shorthorn and Holstein bulls here.

Julius Toews, it was recalled, was the first secretary. When the ambitious community organization decided that the village needed a hospital, Mr. Toews was appointed as the first chairman of the hospital committee. Through his efforts the Bethesda Hospital Society was organized which in 1937 completed Bethesda Hospital.

This work was done at the depth of the depression without the aid of government

grants.

Other members of the first chamber of commerce included John D. Goossen, J. R. Friesen, N. S. Campbell, Jac. G. Kornelsen and C. T. Loewen, all now deceased.

The Board of Trade caught on in the '30's

The Steinbach Board of Trade caught on strong in the early 1930's. On September 7, 1933 the first (under the auspices of the Steinbach Board of Trade) agricultural display took place under the name of the Hanover Agricultural Fair.

It rained but there was a good display in the school building. Members on the agricultural committee were Abe Loewen, P. S. Guenther, J. G. Kornelsen and K. J. B. Reimer.

It was also in the 1930's that the short courses sponsored by the board of trade proved so popular. There were courses on everything from bee-keeping to hog-raising and the farms and public benefitted greatly.

The first annual banquet for members was held February 7, 1934. The RM of Hanover council was invited and given a free meal with the hope that they wouldn't increase taxes.

In 1933 and '34 the board of trade organized eight boys' and girls' clubs and introduced various high grade livestock and poultry into the area.

The board of trade or chamber of commerce also concentrated on improving farm-business relations and providing better sports grounds and fair facilities.

Over the years the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce played an integral part in the successful growth of the community and though every accomplishment cannot be listed here (much is covered already under other chapters) an examination of the organization's activities in one year — take 1957 as an example — indicates the kind of comprehensive program the chamber of commerce was involved in.

In brief, the chamber promoted the community and area in 1957 in the following ways:

The chamber helped the agricultural society

by offering prizes for floats, giving moral support and by asking members to support the society's efforts with prizes, cash donations and advertising. The chamber also provided the land for the fair grounds.

The chamber donated \$3,000 to improve the sports ground, build fences and baseball diamonds and thus promote the playing of baseball and other sports. The chamber backed the town council in a contemplated move to sell the telephone system, thus hastening the installation in Steinbach of a modern dial system.

It helped to foster an interest in education by providing scholarships for capable students, publicizing education week, sponsoring the annual "teachers' tour", an event which annually gave the town valuable publicity. The chamber also did its share in promotion of roads and tourist possibilities.

In the field of health, the chamber of commerce aided the carrying out in the community of the T.B. x-ray surveys every second year. It helped, too, with the organization and promotion of the amateur hours needed to provide funds for the clinic.

Aside from the above-mentioned efforts, one major contribution for many years was the chamber's organization of blood donor clinics. Much good work was done here and the community remains one of the best sources of badly-needed blood to this day.

In more recent years the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce has grown to the point where a part-time managing secretary has had to be hired. The executive of the organization appointed Jim Steenson in March, 1968. Manager of Monarch Wear at the time, Mr. Steenson's duties consisted of co-ordinating all efforts of the chamber and generally doing the work which was planned but for which no one in business found the time.

In reviewing the whole history of the local chamber of commerce it appears that the greatest contribution the organization has made has involved attracting new trade. It has made the community a better place in which to live not only by providing or agitating for new services but by adopting good business practices and planning big promotions which draw people from far outside the immediate trade area.

Inventive genius was a birthright of the people

In a study of the history of the Steinbach community it appears sometimes as though ingenuity and an inventive genius were a birthright of the Mennonite people. Practically every one of the larger businesses in Steinbach today owes part of its success to some invention if not by the business' founder, then by some local inventor.

And while nearly every community, perhaps, may boast of the odd inventor who fritters away his years on a mousetrap or some other invention that somehow never gets to see the light of day, the stories of local people whose inventions actually did materialize and benefitted the inventors, are far too many to be included in this book.

Of the many real inventors who made history in the town, one of the most colorful and successful was Isaac B. Plett who was born in 1867 and died in 1933.

Mr. Plett was only a lad of eight when he came to Steinbach from Russia with his widowed mother but from his very early youth young Isaac's nature turned to invention and adventure. His adventurous nature in later years made him hit the trail during '98 when the gold rush to the Yukon was on and his inventive genius has probably resulted in the latter-day self-feeder on the threshing machine.

But in his youth he worked around the home town, helping his widowed mother make a living. Together with the youths of the age, he started working in sawmills and later was an experienced well driller, thresherman and saw-miller. His sons still have in their possession a contract dated 1906 recording a transaction whereby Plett Sr. purchased from Friesen and Reimer — then agents in Steinbach — one 26 h.p. American Abel steam engine and a forty-inch separator as standard equipment, for

\$4,000. His dining car on wheels was an added novelty.

Long before he had his own machine, in fact long before he became of age, he envisioned a self-feeder on the threshing machine which at that time was being fed by hand. At that time he was still too young to do anything about it and waited for the opportunity when he would be able to build such a feeder.

Shortly after his marriage in 1886, he became owner of the creamery in Kleefeld. Here in the engine room, in his spare time, he set out to build what was to be Canada's first self feeder for a threshing machine.

Naturally such an undertaking could not remain secret very long. The brethren eyed this change in the established order dubiously, as they had eyed the bicycle and other new fangled ideas in the past.

Finally, to avoid publicity, Isaac moved to Winnipeg, and, in an undertaker's basement, carried on his work. It is not known how he got together with Mr. Thompson (the original Thompson Block still stands opposite the City Hall), but at any rate an agreement was made whereby Mr. Plett could work in the basement and use the tools at night providing he kept them sharp for the men who manufactured cas-kets during the day.

Mr. Plett was not one who believed in ghosts, but one night during a storm when some boards that had been set up against the side of the house fell over, a cold chill went up and down his spine and he looked to the next room where the corpses were held until burial.

In this eerie surrounding, during the dark hours of the night, the first automatic sheaf feeder was built. When it was finally put onto a threshing machine, it was found that the engine already had enough load without this added feature, but some 10 years later there appeared on the market — together with a more powerful engine to match — threshing outfits with self feeders attached. One such feeder looked strangely familiar and was known as the Parson Feeder.

His simplified Moon washer was sought after by the hard working pioneer women of the day in the same manner that their great grand-daughters now go after automatic washers.

Less successful was the automatic grain stooker that Mr. Plett spent long hours to develop and build to working conditions. It had

not been built past the experimental stage when it became apparent that the combine would eventually establish itself in the grain belt of Canada and make all mechanical stooking methods obsolete.

Another hit was a low priced, durable hammer and axe handle. The article was simple enough but not so the machine and the method for producing in quantity. Within a few years it was felt that there were no longer enough oak trees of the right quality in the Red River Valley. For awhile, handles were made from birch.

Another invention that created quite a sensation in Steinbach in 1917 was Mr. Plett's helicopter. The machine was completed to the minutest detail, including the painting. When the day for take off arrived, it was found that the model T engine taken off his car lacked the power to take the machine off the ground for a sight-seeing tour over Steinbach.

The former immigrant boy, who took to pioneer life like a duckling takes to water, by all accounts found a good measure of adventure in all kinds of work and creation. At one time, however, he suspected too much adventure being involved, for example, at digging gold in the Yukon. It may not be generally known that someone from this district took part in the hazardous journey during the historic gold rush. Mr. Plett was one of the many who turned back when reports of lawlessness and robberies "over there" collided head on with the weary travellers. He turned back but had a prolonged stopover in the so-called wild west where he helped with the transformation before returning home.

Sons inherit inventive genius

Mr. Plett's two sons, Isaac D. and Abram, both inherited the inventive nature from their father. Abram D. Plett became a very successful inventor and manufacturer of his own inventions at Rosenort. Some of his more important inventions have been a grain loader and a collapsible trailer.

More unorthodox but also highly successful was Isaac who still lives in Steinbach.

Exhibiting the great inventive gift he had, Isaac D. Plett in 1937 invented a now-locally-famous machine used for reinforcing the wax



Isaac D. Plett, who invented a machine used for reinforcing wax foundation. The machine enabled the C. T. Loewen firm to keep atop the bee equipment industry for 25 years. Mr Plett is still living in an old building behind Alf's Radio and Electric.

—Carillon News photo

foundation for the bee industry by a quick process of imbedding wire in the wax.

The machine was rated as the best of its kind in Canada and the wax foundation which it produced enabled Steinbach's C. T. Loewen firm to keep atop the bee equipment industry for 25 years.

Royalties earned by his machine, though small, helped Mr. Plett to live during the years since he first leased it to the Loewen factory in 1938.

Over the years the machine earned or saved hundreds of thousands of dollars for its operators and for the beekeepers who used its products.

Almost as great a break-through for Mr. Plett as the invention of the machine itself, was his design in 1956 of a device for feeding it automatically. This relieved the operator of the job of lifting the wax sheets off the conveyor belt.

Honey production in Canada reached its peak

in 1947 when it was widely used as a sugar substitute during the sugar rationing days. In that year C. T. Loewen & Sons sold \$110,000 worth of beekeepers equipment.

When sugar rationing was lifted, sales fell to \$10,000 and remained around that level until the firm sold all its equipment in 1963. The sale did not include the Plett machine, which was never sold by its inventor, but only leased.

Other local inventors and their inventions were:

— Cornelius F. Toews, founder of Steinbach Bakery, longtime shoemaker and versatile inventor of baking equipment and household gadgets. Some of his inventions included revolving bakery ovens, dough-mixing machines, a device for putting tips on shoe laces and numerous modifications for flour mill and bakery machinery.

— Abram L. Reimer, a well known local carpenter who developed and patented an overhead garage door and then turned his invention into the key for a successful business enterprise.

— A. S. Friesen, whose machine shop in Steinbach played an important part in the early development of the community. Straw blowers were invented here and attached to early threshers. A forerunner of today's combine was even built here. In the industrial line, draglines and other heavy equipment were built and modified.

— Henry and Peter Plett, who were the founders of Plett and Co. which once employed a crew of 35 to 40 men manufacturing all manner of equipment from cheese-making vats to fish boxes. The brothers also patented and manufactured a door latch that was first made in 1928. The Plett brothers were building a barn for C. W. Brandt and he wanted a latch that wouldn't catch the harness of horses passing by and one that could be opened and closed with a mittened hand. The boys did some thinking and developed a latch that was later manufactured with minor changes. Over 150,000 of these were sold by 1952 for the use on barns and machine sheds. "Plettville" became the unofficial name of the site of Plett & Co. where workers' dwellings, a little store and feed mill were clustered around the woodwork factory. It was located four miles north of Steinbach.

— Corney and Werner Fast of Blumenort, whose home-built sod breaker and brush breakers have opened up thousands of acres of land

for farming in nearly every part of the province.

Though there have been many other local people who have earned the title of inventor over the past 97 years, two other success stories probably stand out over the rest. They deal with the Barkman manufacturing firm and the late K. W. Brandt's work on the Winnipeg Waterline.

The story of Barkman Concrete Products

Necessity has often been named the mother of invention and in this respect the story of the huge Barkman Concrete Products plant in Steinbach is no exception. It was built because someone in the plumbing business looked for a better way of building a septic tank.

The new Barkman factory, 100 by 240 feet in size, today produces the pre-cast septic tanks around which the plant is built; it also produces pre-cast concrete steps, sidewalk blocks, patio blocks and ornamental iron railings. Yet, it is only eighteen years ago when the first pre-cast septic tank was built in a little addition behind the Barkman Hardware store on Main Street. How it came about is an interesting story.

When K. R. Barkman and his three sons set up a hardware and plumbing business in Steinbach back in 1947, each of the three sons headed a department. Edwin managed the hardware store, Peter acted as trouble shooter and salesman for heating and plumbing installations and Arnold was in charge of the plumbing installations.

As Arnold recalled in later years, he used to hate building the septic tanks on the job. The traditional way of doing it was to dig the hole, build a wooden form, haul in gravel and cement, mix and pour. If it happened to rain before the form was in, it sometimes delayed construction for weeks.

At best, it was a wasteful, time-consuming business. Worse, a man might pick up a fairly good crew during the summer but there was no work for them in winter, and they would be laid off. If they found a job elsewhere, the search for a new plumbing crew would start all over again in spring. Arnold convinced

himself that there must be a better way and he set out to find it.

In searching for this "better way", Mr. Barkman discounted the steel tank because it cost too much and corroded too quickly. He learned that in many parts of the United States, concrete septic tanks were being made but these did not contain the "innards" which make a septic tank possible in our cooler climate. After looking at all possibilities, he was faced with the fact that if he wanted a better septic tank, he would have to perfect it himself.

So in the summer of 1952 the Barkman family witnessed the laborious birth of the first Barkman all-concrete septic tank. Twenty-four more rolled off the assembly line that same summer.

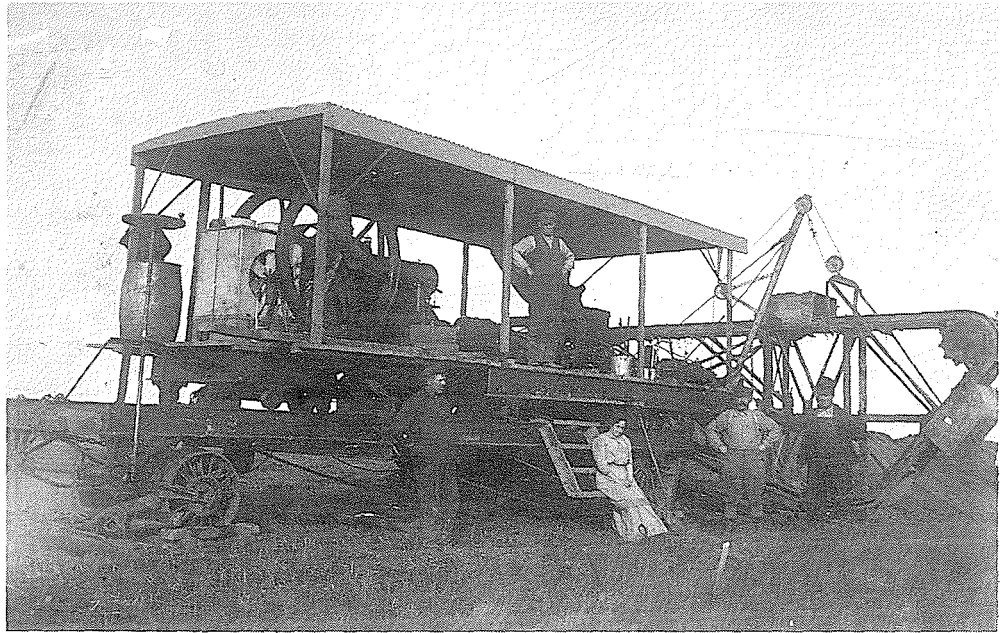
Four of these leaked so badly that they had to be removed after installation; several more fell apart when the workmen did not handle them as gently as they should have. But despite all these setbacks, the experiment proved to be a major breakthrough for Arnold Barkman and the firm. The septic tanks he had built contained an all-concrete bell and siphon of his own designing and these worked perfectly. It was a first of its kind on the North American continent.

From this modest beginning has arisen a large factory, a tribute to the industriousness of its owners and an important factor in the economic development of Steinbach. Today the Barkman-made septic tanks or steps may be seen anywhere in Manitoba and the firm has become one of the largest in Steinbach.

Brandt and Friesen built their own 60-ton dredge

A Steinbach pioneer (1876-1954), Klaas W. Brandt was a man who had a talent for many different trades. Although he had only the education of a pioneer boy, he studied diligently in his spare time and became a civil engineer and licensed surveyor.

Possibly the most interesting chapter in his colorful career came around 1912 when he and his brother-in-law, K. R. Friesen, built a unique dredge which was later used by Mr. Brandt for work on the Winnipeg Water Line, easily the



This dredge was originally built by K. R. Friesen and K. W. Brandt for James Forstall, St. Pierre. It took seven months to build and the builders bought it shortly after it went into operation. In 1913 Mr. Brandt and Mr. Friesen built drainage ditches at Klee-feld and Prairie Rose. (This type of work had previously been done with shovels and scrapers.) In the winter of 1913-14 the partnership dissolved and Mr. Brandt became the sole owner. He later used the dredge for work on the Winnipeg Water Line. In this photo the dredge does not have the unique walking feet which the two inventors had built for it.

— photo courtesy the Friesen family

biggest project in the province at the time.

When the Winnipeg wells could not meet the growing demands for water the city fathers began to lay plans for an aqueduct to bring to the city a supply of water through a concrete pipe 97 miles long. It was to reach from Shoal Lake, part of the Lake of the Woods, to Winnipeg through St. Boniface and under the Red River.

To get the huge, sixty-ton machine to the place of operation it had to be partially dismantled. The moving was done during the winter months, not on big semi-trailers, but on skids and sleighs. After moving and re-assembling, excavation was begun in the spring of 1916. At that time the dredge was located north of Steinbach at Queen's Valley where the waterline was then under construction.

Due to the concrete being poured directly into the finished ditch, the contract called for exact specifications. Consequently, hand shovelers had to be employed for finishing the bottom

and sides where necessary. Brandt's machine straddled the ditch which measured up to 20 feet wide in places. Due to boggy terrain the dredge moved painstakingly. Six shoes raised the machine which was then moved forward through a power winch and then reversed to bring the two centre shoes into moving position for the next operation. The boom was about thirty feet long with a one-yard bucket attached to the end. The dredge shovelled about 1,000 yards a day.

The second part of this contract was to back-fill the earth to cover the pipe to a depth of five feet. This necessitated digging a new ditch beside the pipeline wherever the terrain was low.

During the years a number of Steinbach's oldtimers had a hand in this project including Albert Reimer, Peter Unger, Henry B. Reimer, K. D. Friesen, Henry and Andrew Sobering and Peter S. Guenther. There were about 150 men at that particular section of the work. Construction was about a mile a year, partially due to the

slow setting of the concrete which set the pace for all machines on the job. Mr. Brandt's work started at Millbrook and stretched four miles west to Plymton. Due to the rising costs of labour and materials during the war, this undertaking was not a financial success.

However, Mr. Brandt's interest in engineering was whetted to a greater appetite and his next venture found him as a tool maker with a big construction firm building the great power plant on the Winnipeg River.

Getting that job wasn't easy. The only way to get to the site at that time was by rail so he took the train at Winnipeg. But he got only as far as Lac du Bonnet where he needed a pass

which he could not get because they needed no help at that time. Since Mr. Brandt was determined to get there, anyway, he started out on foot along the track but he hadn't gone far when a supply train caught up to him and gave him a lift to camp. After he talked to the superintendent for a few minutes, he was given a pass and started working.

After this work was completed his interest turned to civil engineering. For two years he ran drainage levels for the surrounding municipalities. In 1926 he was hired as a civil engineer with the provincial government and this position took him to many parts of the province. His last survey job with the government was on the Morden-Sprague highway about 1940.

Newspapers and radio

Though communities outside the Mennonite East Reserve such as Emerson and Dominion City had their own newspapers long before the turn of the century, the first newspaper in this area was the **Giroux Advocate** which was founded by a group of leading businessmen in that community in 1912. The first issue was printed March 13, 1912.

The paper was printed by Jacob S. Friesen of Kleefeld who had bought a small printing press in 1909. He moved to Giroux in 1912 and after awhile devoted himself entirely to the printing trade.

Mr. Friesen printed the **Advocate** for approximately a year when he found it did not pay for itself. As a result, he discontinued printing it. At the same time, however, he ran into even more serious difficulties of a different nature. Typhus hit the family and both Mr. and Mrs. Friesen and two daughters lay near death. But after some time, with the kind help of neighbors, all were returned to health and the future began to look brighter.

By this time - 1913 - Steinbach was already a progressive community as the businessmen had already shown their interest in a newspaper by advertising heavily in the **Advocate**. Mr. Friesen decided to print a German weekly there.

With the help of his son Peter T. Friesen, (later founder of Pembina Printing in Winkler) who solicited subscriptions, the first Mennonite

weekly came into being in Manitoba in 1913 and was called **Volks-Bote**.



Jacob S. Friesen, first printer in the Steinbach area. Mr. Friesen bought his first press in 1909 and remained in the printing business until 1924. He passed away in 1931.

—photo courtesy Mrs. Gertrude Friesen

GIROUX ADVOCATE

Vol. I. No. 1.

GIROUX, MAN. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 1912.

\$ 1.00 a Year.

Let die Anzeige nicht!

Wenn die Anzeige nicht für folgende inseriert:

Wir führen einen großen Vorrat von
Geflügel, Schweine, Schmalz, Butter,
Fisch, Meeresfrüchte, Obst, Gemüse,
und vieles mehr für den Export.

Joseph D. Jossens & Co.
Steinbach, Man.

Salutatory

In making our bow to the public with this initial copy of "The Giroux Advocate", we do so feeling that there is a place in this corner of the world for such a paper as we propose to issue.

Almost every other small town in the province has its own newspaper, and if this paper is conducted properly, it should, with the patronage, interest and cooperation of the public, be a factor in keeping the people in touch with one another, and bringing to light the possibilities of our district.

But we feel that a local paper can take up local subjects, and local questions, subjects and questions that are of local nature, and that are of importance to our own locality.

Our columns will always be open to a discussion of public questions, particularly in regard to the farming on this part of the country, and we will always be pleased to make room for the views of our readers.

Owing to the large number of people speaking the German language in the adjacent districts, we have decided to print one page of the paper in this language. The continuation of this feature will depend on its reception by our readers.

We will publish each week a report on market prices of the various classes of produce, and trust this feature will be somewhat valuable.

We will also be open to criticisms advanced for the improvement of the paper, and will make corrections and alterations to apply to the public as a paper as possible.

C. N. R. Train Service.

Trains from Winnipeg going south:
To St. James — 7:15 P. M.
To Port Arthur — 10:40 A. M.
To Port Arthur — 7:50 A. M.
To Port Arthur — 10:40 A. M.
To Port Arthur — 7:50 A. M.

Market.

Seymour & Co. are paying following prices delivered at factory:
Chests of drawers \$3.50 to \$4.00
Dressers \$3.50 to \$4.00
Wardrobes \$3.50 to \$4.00
Beds \$3.50 to \$4.00
Chests of drawers \$3.50 to \$4.00
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Beds \$3.50 to \$4.00

STEINBACH

Steinbach is one of the most progressive of the smaller towns of Manitoba. It lies about 40 miles south east of Winnipeg, and 7 miles south west of Giroux. Its nearest Railway Point, it contains a population of upwards of 600 people of German extraction; also for the most part possess a ready command of the English language.

The town is built upon both sides of a very wide street about a mile long. It is mainly lined on either side with trees, which, together with the well arranged flower gardens in front of the residences, present, during the summer season, an excellent appearance.

Some beautiful residences, equipped with all modern improvements are to be found here. Among these are the special mention are the houses belonging to H. W. Reimer, J. W. Reimer, Peter T. Barkman, and John L. Frierson.

More business is transacted in Steinbach than in any other town of equal size in Manitoba.

The two principal stores are those belonging to K. Reimer, son and H. W. Reimer, the former carrying in the neighborhood of \$100,000 stock in dry goods, groceries and crockery, and the latter an equal amount of hardware, boots and shoes, furniture, etc.

Two men and popular firms have opened up business within the last couple of years, and are making a strong bid for a share of the trade. The one is John D. Gieson & Co., carrying a large stock of hardware and furniture. The other is the Steinbach Flour Mills, an established firm and enjoys a wide patronage, for the most part due to the quantity and reliability of its product.

Mr. J. L. Frierson, All the principal implement firms are well represented.

Mr. P. T. Barkman has the agency of the Massey Harris Co. and being well known to the trade, does an immense business.

Erison & Reimer represent the International Harvester Co. and are both brothers in their line.

J. B. Toews handles the J. L. Case Company's traction and thrashing machinery, and does a good trade.

As also does John F. Gieson who deals in clock-shaft pieces etc.

Erison Bros. and Barkman Bros. whose work consists chiefly in iron and steel turning, are doing a big business and are most capable workmen.

Mr. A. S. Blatz is the territorial agent of the town and is doing a thriving trade.

Steinbach can boast of one of the best localities in the province outside of the cities. It is owned by Mr. K. R. Toews, who also manages it in a highly satisfactory manner. A stage is operated in connection with the route and meets all trains for the convenience of travellers.

Two lumber yards are located in the town owned especially by the Steinbach Lumber Co. and Leewen & Co. and all kinds of building materials and hardware are constantly kept in stock by these progressive firms.

In the installation of modern improvements Steinbach is keeping ahead very nicely. With the Central heated in the town, a local telephone system covers all the surrounding country for miles around and accommodates over 400 subscribers, at very reasonable rates.

The Steinbach Lighting Co. have recently installed a large storage battery and now give their patrons an electric light service day and night as required.

ONLY \$ 84.00
Buys enough Concrete Blocks to build a Barn 26 x 40 x 8 feet.

ONLY \$ 184.00
Buys "water proof" Blocks for a cottage 20 x 22 x 10 feet with colored trimmings

ONLY \$ 226.00
Buys enough Concrete Blocks for a "SILO" 14 feet diameter and 23 feet high.

These SNAPS are for early spring orders only, many experiments have been made in Concrete construction with more or less success but perfection has at last been reached in the production of a hollow concrete Block, which is a perfect substitute for brick, stone and all other forms of building.

Those who built of our hollow concrete blocks, are all perfectly satisfied.

[Testimony] To whom it may concern: We the undersigned trustees of the Order of the S. D. No. 1486 having erected a school house of cement blocks made by the STANDARD CEMENT STONE CO. of Giroux have found the same to be satisfactory in every respect, and would recommend them to any one intending to build.

Andrew Blair, A. Roussin, D. R. Mc Donald.

STANDARD CEMENT STONE CO. GIROUX, MAN.

Giroux Agricultural Society meets.

A meeting of the directors of the Giroux Agricultural Society was held at Mr. Seymour's on Wednesday evening to arrange prize lists for the coming Exhibition. About the same amount will be offered in prizes as last year. They also decided to have a plowing match in the summer and a stock fair in the fall after the Exhibition. The meeting adjourned till Monday to give the various committees time to arrange the parts of the list allotted to them.

Good Times.

The times are getting good again. John Langill tells us so.

I find good times about the place. Harry Lamb's late Plymouth Rock by age in sympathy.

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NEWS ITEMS

Mr. Thos. Mackay has returned to Giroux after a year's absence.

We are very sorry to state, Mr. J. Simpson has been very ill, while the nurses and household.

Dr. Strangand wife of Winnipeg, attended the meeting of the Board of Trade on Saturday evening for the purpose of making arrangements for the doctor to open a practice here.

Mr. Wm. Bruce has succeeded in trapping six true wolves this winter.

Mr. M. Taitel of the Emerald Dairy, Winnipeg, came out and purchased a number of milk cows from Seymour & Co. last week.

Mr. Seymour has been present at his new farm purchased from Mr. Norman-Lewis.

Mr. J. E. Green who has been strenuously pushing the sale of Mellott's Cream Separators, has succeeded in placing quite a number lately.

The Elevators are paying 85 cents for wheat.

Mr. H. Lund has some silver forty dollars a month, clear, from his home the past two months these is certainly great possibilities for the poultry industry in this district if conducted properly.

We understand Mr. P. Heide has rented a house in St. Anne and will reside there.

Mr. Alex. Chalmers will move onto his new farm about 1st or April.

A sure late runner of spring run has been in the large number of empty towns treading their way back to Winnipeg.

Mrs. Savie and Mrs. Savie of Winnipeg are visiting at Mrs. Duckworth for a few days.

Mr. Dan Simpson has spent a hard winter trying to trap wolves; after attending carefully to his traps every day all winter, and using up all the meat he had in stock, he was rewarded at last by catching a fine large grey hound this week; after spending about half a day and getting severely bitten him, succeeded in getting him loose, minus a piece of his paw.

Mr. Dan and C. Culbert of Rossford were in town last week.

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

Subscribe for the "Advocate"

For Sale!
Two Jersey Bull Calves
eligible for registration
David Langill Giroux.

Fish
Owing to having a large stock of fish on hand, will give substantial reductions for next three weeks, to clear up.

Seymour & Co., Butchers

For Sale!
Choice American Cattle's Steppings, Iron Pulleys, Sags, or Latching from both levels, Grand winter Lovers.

24 page brochure for sale in person, order, and order. These for sale.

E. S. DICKWORTH, GIROUX

Get Our Prices!
ON GROCERY STAPLES
Moonies Biscuits and Candies
Red Cross Pickles & Spices
Royal Crown Soap
Nu-dru - Co. Remedies
Chamberlains Cough Cure

Agency
Victor Gramophones and Records
J. P. LANGILL, GIROUX

Fun and Frolic.

Economy. — A woman entered a photograph office recently, and said the following message to her husband: "Come as soon as you can. I am dying. Kate — Three hours, for her arrival at the district, village at which she was staying, and was met at the door by Kate herself, bright and smiling. "Whatever did you mean by sending me such a message?" he asked. "She said she was dying," he said. "I am dying to see you, but my ten words ran out, and I had to stop at that."

Real Example. — A well-to-do country lady one day said to her gardener, "Man, Tammas, I won't say why you don't get married. You've been married and all you want to complete it is a wife. You know, the best gardener that ever lived had a wife."

Quite right, advises, quite right, said Tammas, but he didn't keep his job long after he got the wife.

Advertising Rates.

21 cts. per line first rate per line of text, per each insertion.

Preferred position, 10 percent extra. Full position, next page nothing more of any selected page or location, 25 percent extra.

Reading notices, reports of meetings, etc., 5 cts. per line.

Any order you may favor us with will have our best attention.

J. P. LANGILL, Advertising Manager.



Delivery of a new press to the Steinbach Post in 1924. This old hand-fed Gordon press was used for years and is being restored for display at the print shop at the Mennonite Village Museum.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

A year later Mr. Friesen moved his printing equipment from Giroux to Steinbach and changed the name of the paper from **Volks-Bote** to **Steinbach Post**. Here he picked up new business as the community grew. One other paper he printed in these years was the **Botschafter der Wahrheit**, a monthly paper for the Holdemann church members.

Mr. Friesen had grown older and decided to sell the business to A. B. Dyck in 1923. Mr. Dyck, a new immigrant who later became a very well known Mennonite author (both hum-

our and historical) continued to publish the **Post** until 1936.

P.A. Vogt became a partner with Mr. Dyck in the fall of 1923 and remained for three or four years when he left and Mr. Dyck again became sole owner.

In 1936, the business was sold to Gerhard S. Derksen, a high school principal from Russia who had headed a group of several thousand Mennonite immigrants from Russia to Saskatchewan in 1923.

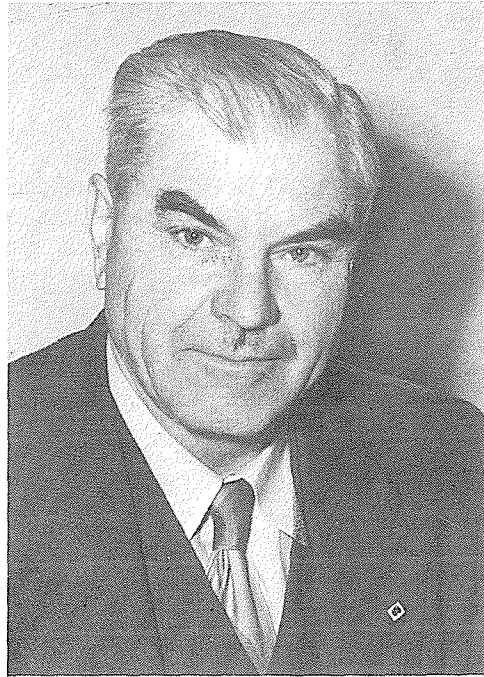
Mr. Derksen had settled on a farm at Herbert that year but farming was not his calling and after nine years he accepted an invitation from his friend and former colleague in Russia to assist him at Steinbach.

Continuing to publish the **Post**, Mr. Derksen founded the firm of Derksen Printers in 1946. After Mr. Derksen passed away in 1957 his three sons continued to run the business. Jacob H. Block was appointed editor until 1960 when failing eyesight forced his retirement. He was succeeded by Edwin Groening and then Bernhardt Bott. Because of the widely-scattered circulation, the **Post** could not draw enough advertising and consequently had to be subsidized in the last years. When Derksen Printers decided in 1966 that they no longer could carry the burden of a non-profit newspaper despite



This was the printing shop and home of Jacob S. Friesen who published the **Steinbach Post**, in 1918. In the picture, left to right, are Agnes P. Wiebe, now Mrs. P. S. Guenther, her daughter Margaret and Anna Friesen.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther



Gerhard Derksen, editor and publisher of the Steinbach Post from 1936 until his death in 1957. Mr. Derksen founded Derksen Printers Ltd. in 1948.

—Derksen Printers photo

its appeal to the older Mennonite people, the mailing list was taken over by Peter Publications of Omaha, Nebraska where it continued to be published under a changed format and with abbreviated local news coverage.

The Carillon News — most successful rural paper in the province

Beginning as a six-page tabloid sheet on Feb. 21, 1946, the **Carillon News** grew, in less than 15 years to become the largest and most successful rural newspaper in the entire province.

Begun by Eugene Derksen, who later took over as president of Derksen Printers after his father's death in 1957, it attempted immediately upon its founding to inform the people within a 5,000-square-mile area of local events and happenings to promote roads, drainage and other developments.

The fact that it was a regional rather than a

local newspaper guaranteed its success and directly and indirectly promoted Steinbach as the capital of the Southeast.

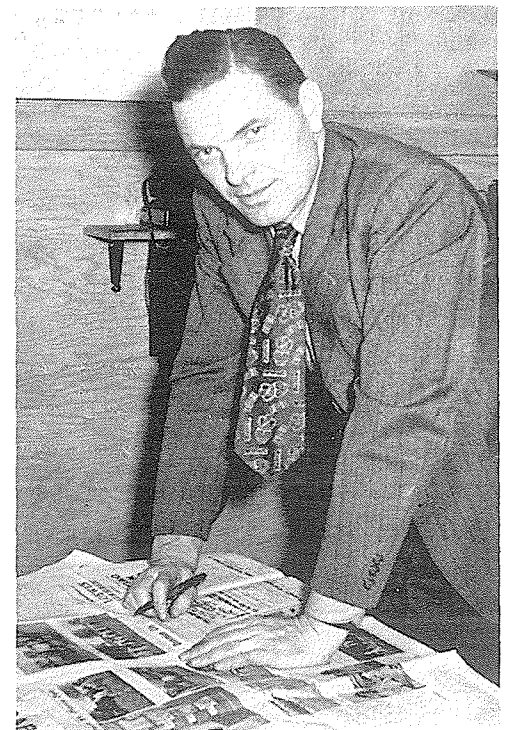
Though Mr. Derksen was not an experienced journalist, he had some very definite ideas about publishing a newspaper and no other area in Manitoba could have offered such an excellent field for his plans. The paper was to deviate from the regular weekly in several ways:

1) It was to be as much the home town paper of the smallest village in the area as it would be of the town it was published in.

2) It was to have local pictures.

Right from the outset Mr. Derksen determined to show southeastern Manitoba in its true perspective.

His plan worked. In addition to doing a tremendous public relations job for the entire area, the **Carillon** turned out to be an excellent news sheet. Aided by some 40 rural correspon-



Eugene Derksen, who became president of Derksen Printers following his father's death in 1957. Mr. Derksen founded the **Carillon News**, which later became the largest and most successful rural newspaper in Manitoba, in 1946. This photo was taken around 1955.

dents, Mr. Derksen, with his brothers Bruno and George, turned out a type of newspaper that made a Wall Street banker take pen in hand and write a letter to the editor remarking that he was under the impression that Steinbach merchants had gone 'plum crazy' with their progressive advertising promotions and car deals; and the fellow from Quebec to write the editor to ask to keep the paper coming because the *Carillon* was a most welcome letter from home.

In 1950 the paper was awarded first prize as the best all-round newspaper in the province and after that never once stopped being a winner. In 1958 it was named the best weekly in all of Canada and the 1960's and 1970's saw it reap awards in every category.

CFAM went on the air March 13, 1957

CFAM, Manitoba's 10th radio station, came to life Wednesday evening, March 13, 1957 with Premier Douglas Campbell officially turning the switch to bring the complex machinery to life.

The new station, owned and operated by the Southern Manitoba Broadcasting Co., a company comprised exclusively of Mennonite shareholders, broadcast from 1290 on the radio dial with a power of 1,000 watts.

The purpose of the new station, as outlined at the opening ceremonies, was to provide good music with featured farm news, educational topics and religious programs.

The new station was very well received, especially by the many Mennonite communities who identified with the station's aims and policies and after a year in operation, its future success was pretty well guaranteed except for one thing, an attempt by a group of Steinbach businessmen to establish a radio station in their own community.

Steinbach was represented in the preliminary meetings to organize CFAM but these representatives withdrew when it was learned that the group as a whole favored location at Altona rather than at Steinbach.

In late March, 1958, just when CFAM was celebrating its first birthday, it became public that a group of Steinbach businessmen had formed a broadcasting company for the pur-

pose of building a radio station in Steinbach. President of the eight-man board was John Brandt; secretary was Peter J. Reimer.

The established station, however, was a step ahead of this Steinbach group. While the Steinbach businessmen were organizing and planning to present an application for a license to the Board of Broadcast Governors, CFAM sought permission to boost power from 1,000 to 5,000 watts and improve reception by 25 to 30 percent.

Pete J. Reimer and L. A. Barkman of Steinbach attended the Ottawa hearing where CFAM presented its case to the Board of Broadcast Governors. The Steinbach group protested CFAM's request for a power step-up at this time and asked that the Board's decision be deferred until the application for another station, to be known as the Southeast Broadcasting Co., be heard.

The Board granted the power boost to CFAM and turned down the application for a new Steinbach station.

In 1959, CFAM again increased its signal when the Board of Broadcast Governors approved a power output of 10,000 watts and 1964 marked a banner year for the company when additional broadcasting facilities were established and a second transmitter, CHSM, powered by 10,000 watts, was built.

CHSM's transmitter was built near Steinbach and began broadcasting on March 16 at 1250 on the dial. The company thus acquired an interesting 'dual personality' with programs which originated in the same studio (at Altona) being broadcast simultaneously by two separate stations.

Main program emphasis has always been on quality rather than mere popularity in broadcasts. In a unique departure from modern broadcasting trends, CFAM/CHSM avoids the hit parades and soap operas, relies on folk and local performers for much of its program content. In the folk music field, the station has found a rich source of material in continental or European music.

The stations have also found a rich source of talent in southeastern Manitoba - the Treble Teens Choir of Steinbach. This talented choir has performed extensively on CFAM and CHSM. In July of 1967 the Treble Teens were introduced to the entire country as one of the most exciting vocal ensembles in Canada at the Can-

adian Centenary Festival of Choirs at St. John, New Brunswick. And their continuing popularity among young and old alike, was one of the reasons why Radio Southern Manitoba produced an album of folk songs by the choir in 1967.

CFAM/CHSM has won a number of awards for its efforts. In 1961 the Honourable Errick F. Willis, Q. C. Lieutenant - Governor of Manitoba, presented the station with a Beaver Award, which is sponsored by Canadian Broadcaster magazine. The award was presented 'for distinguished service to Canadian Broadcasting in 1961', and paid tribute to CFAM/CHSM for its contributions to the religious, cultural, and agricultural life of Southern Manitoba.

Public service has always been one of the main reasons for the existence of the station. In February, 1966, for example, the station conducted a 'Food for Vietnam' campaign to raise \$10,000 for civilian victims of the war in Vietnam. The \$10,000 target was reached in only 10 days as a flood of donations poured in from listeners. By mid-May, this amount had grown to an unexpected \$41,000.

The radio station is also an important employer in the region. Its staff, which numbered only eight people back in 1957, has grown to 29 people.

The incredible H. W. Reimer Store by Gerald Wright

In 1959 when the C.B.C.'s television production group in Winnipeg was working on a series of historical sceneries depicting life in the early west, they ran into difficulty because they couldn't find authentic 'period' costumes and furniture.

Somehow or other they got wind of a store out at Steinbach that was known to specialize in relics of the past. That same afternoon a car loaded with C. B. C. men pulled up outside H. W. Reimer's General Store on Main Street. As soon as they opened the door they knew they had the right place. Their enthusiasm grew as they progressed back into the dimly lit interior of the store.

Before they left, some three hours later, they had combed the old emporium from one end to the other and had cleaned up some \$200 worth

of relics. Among the things that caught the interest of the C. B. C. men were two brand new buggy whip holders, a baby cradle of the rocker variety, one of the first kind of safety razors ever made (brand new of course), half a dozen ox balls (for screwing onto the ends of an oxen's horns), an ice cream freezer and a set of mosquito nets for horses.

The only odd thing about these relics was that they weren't old. They had just been on the shelves for 30 or 40 years.

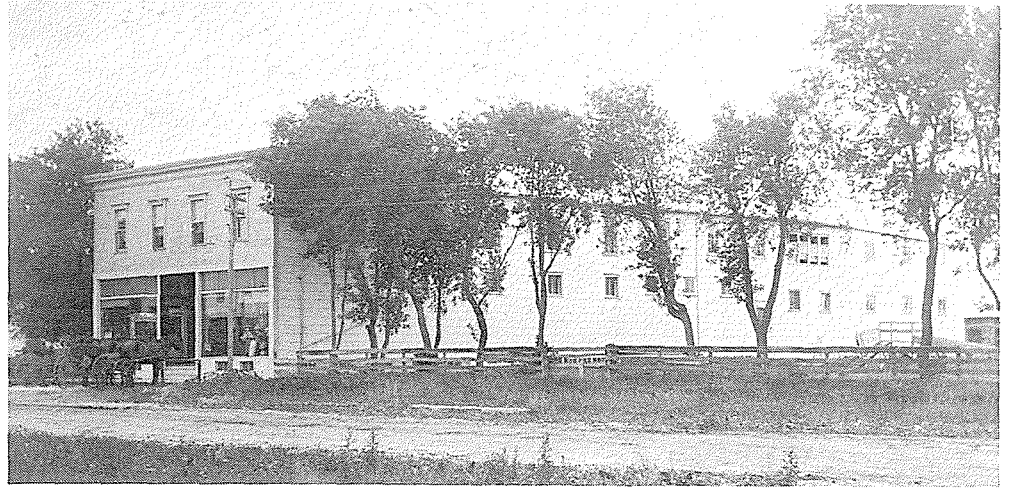
Until it finally closed its doors for good in January, 1964, it was Steinbach's oldest business establishment, founded in 1886 by the late Henry W. Reimer and passed on to his six sons.

Henry W. Reimer, the man responsible for founding this remarkable business and the father of the later operators, landed in Canada from Russia in the summer of 1874. He was 14 years old and showed contempt for the shackles of convention by diving off the Red River steamer that brought the family up from Moorhead and swimming around the boat just for fun. Most of the family inherited his pleasant disregard for what was fashionable and this probably explains why they could carry on so placidly amidst a commercial world that contrasted so strongly with their own.

There was a day when the H. W. Reimer store was a source of awe and wonder to every small country boy who came to town with his parents. Unlike any other stores, there was absolutely nothing that a farmer could produce which the store would not accept in exchange for goods.

At the height of its prosperity the store did as much as \$4,000 worth of business in a single day and employed 14 persons full time. At the time when the Reimer firm achieved this success, Steinbach was still a relatively small village without a railroad and served only by horse and wagon. At the time of its last remodelling, in 1914, "H. W.'s" had no equal for size in rural Manitoba and only a few stores in Winnipeg were larger or better stocked. Even in 1963, 49 years later, its 17,600 square feet still made it the largest store building in Steinbach.

Its nearest rival for size in Steinbach was Penner's Tom-Boy which at that time had some 16,000 square feet of floor space. Its nearest rival for length of service in the community was



The H. W. Reimer's store in the 1920's. At the time of its last remodelling, in 1914, "H.W.'s" had no equal for size in rural Manitoba. The large show windows at the front of the store were practically unheard of in rural areas at the time.

—photo courtesy Marie Schilstra



The H. W. Reimer's store around 1961, just a few years before the business closed its doors for good in January, 1964.

—Carillon News photo

the Friesen Machine Shop which was established in 1892.

With the exception of Sundays, New Year's and Easter, the store kept its doors open almost continually from 8 to 10 at night. Ordinary statutory holidays affected the stores traditions but little.

First word that the end might be in sight for the old store came in January, 1962 when the Town of Steinbach announced that it had taken out an option on the property. The option was to be exercised in the event that school district ratepayers approved the building of a new school which they did by a 395-80 majority on May 29.

The papers formally concluding the deal for the stipulated price of \$37,000 were signed in early June. Manager Henry Reimer privately stated that he felt this sum was only half what his business was worth, adding "the goodwill of this place alone should be worth \$25,000."

Doors closed for good Jan. 12, 1964

The store finally closed its doors on January 12, 1964 and the town used part of the space for construction of the new civic centre. Thus ended 78 years service to the community. Since the death of the founder, the business had been operated by the three Reimer brothers - Henry Klass and Ben.

Over the 78 preceding years the store had become an institution and its exit from the scene came as a blow to the dozens of oldtimers who spent many happy hours 'shooting the breeze' on the benches and kegs in the hardware "department".

Even up to the last years you could walk in the front doors and leave the 1960's behind because the store had changed but little in the appearance or in tempo since the turn of the century. Although it occupied one of the most desirable locations in town and was still, in point of floor space, the largest store in Steinbach, H. W. Reimers (est. 1886) has clung doggedly to the styles, to the display methods, to the customers and even to the type of merchandise that was in full vogue half a century ago.

Even the customers seemed to belong to another age. On an average they were elderly people and farmers. By far the majority of them preferred the traditional Low German language

to the new fangled English which had increasingly usurped the place of German along Main Street. But only as a customer surveyed the stocks of the shelves did the age of the place strike him with full impact.

In the age of supermarkets and shelves laden with the latest plastic and nylon gadgets, it was scarcely believable that hundreds of feet of shelf space could be given to such things as coal oil lamps, straight razors, horse blankets, wheel caps for buggies, frame straps for harness, cow bells and the type of patent medicines that passed the peak of their popularity during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Time Was Unimportant

You need merely have suggested to one of the store's congenial easygoing operators, the H. W. Reimer brothers, that you wanted to look around. They would cheerfully take you through their store from one end to the other and show you anything you wanted to see, for to them, like the age to which they belonged, time was of no particular importance.

Easy going Ben, a florid-faced, congenial chap, was one of the three brothers who carried on the business alone since their father died and the rest of the family moved out into different pursuits. Henry, the oldest, was a short balding bachelor who loved informality. He preferred making change from his wallet to keeping a cash register and served for years as the firm's manager, purchaser, and accountant. Klass, the third partner, was likewise unchanged by the changing times. He knew the exact whereabouts of every box, can and bottle in the sprawling building.

The building was not only 160 feet long and 40 feet wide but had two storeys the same size and a basement almost as big. Even the heating system bore the mark of age. A basement boiler fired with cordwood taken in trade for produce, heated the rambling big building through steam radiators.

And H. W. Reimers carried a stock of a type that was probably unmatched by any other store in modern Manitoba. Needed a charcoal foot warmer for the sleigh or cutter? H. W.'s had it and brand new, too. Needed some new shiny caps for your buggy wheels? Or a pair of fine leather high laced ladies' boots? H. W.'s had that too. Or possibly you

Steinbach Post

Oktober 29, 1924.

Geschäftskunden von 5 Uhr vormittags bis 6 Uhr abends.
Sonntags bis 9 Uhr abends.**H. W. REIMER'S Limited.****Unübertroffene große Auswahl in Schnittware.**

Wir empfehlen allen sparamen Hausfrauen, bevor sie Ihre Einkäufe machen, unser großes Lager verschiedenster Schnittwaren für den Winterbedarf zu besichtigen und sich zu überzeugen, daß unsere Auswahl in Manigfaltigkeit, Schönheit der Farben und Schattierungen alles überbietet. Wir bitten, unsere Preise mit denen in anderen Geschäften zu vergleichen und Sie werden finden, daß wir auch in diesem alle anderen übertreffen.

Unterwäsche für Frauen und Mädchen.

Kleece Lined oder gerippte schwere auch leichte Gewebe in allen Größen und verschiedenen Schnitten zu niedrigen Preisen.

Klanell (Woge)

Grauer Klanell, über eine Yard breit, sehr geeignet für Unterröcke, gute Qualität.
Nur 95c. pro Yard.

Eben eine große Sendung Nähgarn (Zwirn), Häfelgarn, Klosterseide und Strickbaumwolle erhalten.

Nähnadeln, ein Satz enthaltend 4 Nadeln mit Nadeln verschiedenster No. nur 15c. pro Satz.

Werte die nirgends bertroffen werden.**Für Väter und Söhne.**

Das Sparen ist ebenso wichtig wie das Verdienen. Einen Dollar gespart, heißt einen Dollar verdient. Dieses können alle, die ihre Kleidung wie: Unterwäsche, Strümpfe, Schuhe und anderes mehr in unserem Geschäfte kaufen.

Echtvollene Herbstanzüge in den verschiedensten Farben für Männer, Jünglinge und Knaben.

Homespuns.
gewöhnliche so auch Sportanzüge.
Tweed.

\$18.50 bis \$30.00**Umänderungen kostenlos.**

Serges
gemusterte und einfache
Worsted.

Haus-Slipper für Frauen

sind in großer Auswahl eingetroffen und können wir mit den gewünschten Nummern und verschiedenen Farben dienen.

Männer-Überzieher.

Etwas wirklich Gutes und zudem zu sehr mäßigen Preisen. Tadelloser Schnitt.
Wir bitten, sie sich anzusehen.

Mäntel für Frauen und Mädchen.

Viele Frauen und Mädchen haben gewiß schon recht viel gedacht, wo sie ihre Mäntel für diesen Spätherbst und Winter kaufen können. Kaufen Sie nichts ohne Besichtigung. Kommen Sie zu uns und Sie werden auch in Mäntel das finden, was Sie gebrauchen und was Ihnen gefällt. Unsere Mäntel sind mit oder ohne Pelzbesatz, Kunstnachverzierungen, ganz eingefutert mit Zwischenfütter und mit dem jetzt am meisten bevorzugten Seitenabschluß Effect.

Bemerkung.

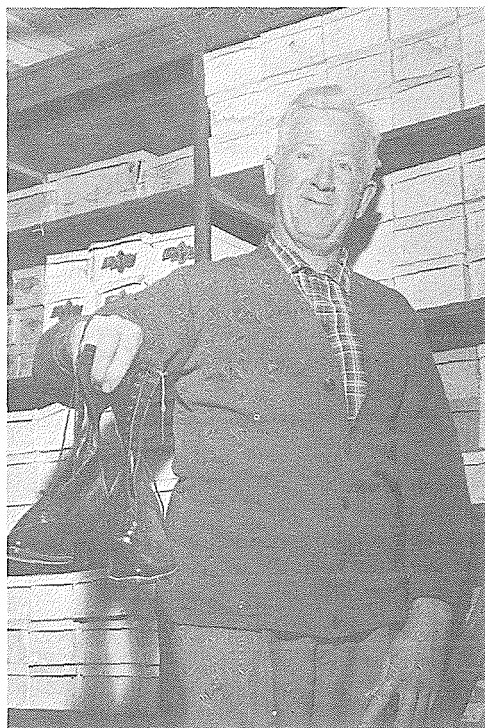
Unser Voratz ist, nicht großes Geschrei in unseren Bekanntmachungen zu machen und, um Kunden anzulocken, einige Waren unter dem natürlichen Preise zu verkaufen. Komme ein jeder und überzeuge sich, daß alles bei uns den Tatsachen entspricht. Wir verkaufen wirklich Gutes zu mäßigen Preisen.

Auch diejenige, welche ihre Einkäufe in der Großstadt zu machen belieben, laden wir freundlichst ein, unser Geschäft zu besuchen. Es wird uns ein Vergnügen sein, allen verehrtesten Besuchern unsere Ware vorzulegen.

Gute reelle Bedienung sichern wir allen zu.

H. W. Reimer's Limited.

An H. W. Reimer's Ltd. ad in the Oct. 29, 1924 Steinbach Post. Those readers able to read the German will appreciate the effectiveness of the soft sell in this advertisement.



Ben H. W. Reimer of H. W. Reimer's holds a ladies' lace-up shoe. These used to be a very popular item at the store in past decades and you could even find the old pair stocked there up into the late 1950's.

—Cartillon News photo

were looking for a pair of corduroy, button-up-the-side leggings for the children. You know, the kind they used to wear in 1910? Well, you could get them at H. W. too. They were upstairs in a box near the north wall with a tag marked "Sale Price 59¢".

Aladdin lamps, according to a big sign in one part of the main store in 1964, were pretty hard to beat. They were 'the last word in safety, give amazing white light, feature astonishing economy, delight the eyes, give dependable service, light instantly, and you will have no more smoke or noise.

Or if you were in the market for a good pair of tongs to put in the old boar's nose when leading him from one place to another, you'd come to the right place. Then, too, there were lots of straight razors in stock and a couple of models of the first safety razors ever made. The price: 65 cents. The C.B.C. bought one of them when they were there and the Menno-

nites who visited from Paraguay were the best customers for the straight razors.

You could get a good brass cow bell for \$2.48 and the turnover the store enjoyed on this item even in 1964 was amazing. Ben knew the name for cowbell in both Ukrainian and French.

If there was anything you couldn't reach, you just stepped onto one of the mobile ladders. These were installed in the store when it was remodelled in 1910 or thereabouts and were ideal for reaching those high top shelves about 12 feet up. The patent on the ladder read "April 20, 1897."

Patent medicines a specialty

It was in the health and drug department that the Reimer brothers really took the keenest interest. Ask them for a loaf of white bread and they would, while not directly refusing to sell it, warn you solemnly that this "paper paste" was known to be the direct cause of most cancer and heart trouble. If you wished to avoid an early grave from one of these causes, they had a type of bread made from unbleached flour and another made from rye that weighed a little more but was proof positive against the inroads of disease. If your kidneys bothered you, you would find, in the patent medicine department, "Clarks Climax Kidney Cure," a liquid elixir concocted for the purpose of curing "kidney ailments arising from the use of hard or alkali water, exposure, heavy colds, etc." It said right on the bottle in unmistakably clear printing that "This remedy will be found a positive cure for all kidney disease in either sex."

On the other hand you could have been troubled by biliousness, sour stomach, palpitation, inner nervousness, sick stomach or colic, in which case you might have found that "Green's Great Dyspeptic Panacea" did the trick.

Other cure-all remedies in the store as late as 1964 were "Slocans Coltfoot Expectorant", "Mother Siegels Syrup", and "Hirst's Pain Exterminator". There was also a bottle with a bright-colored label which said, "Florida Water, 75 percent alcohol".

Service clubs and organizations

Aside from the elected bodies such as town council, there have been various service clubs and volunteer organizations in Steinbach that have greatly improved the quality of life in the community through their efforts over the years.

Though the activities of what has probably been the most important organization, the Chamber of Commerce, is dealt with in a separate chapter, there were four other main organizations — The Steinbach District Ladies' Hospital Aid, the Steinbach Women's Institute, the Steinbach Kinsmen Club and the Jaycees — whose contributions stand out in a history of the community.

Steinbach District Ladies' Hospital Aid

The Steinbach District Ladies' Hospital Aid was first organized April 11, 1938 when a group of women met at the home of Mrs. Henry B. Reimer.

One of the main reasons for organizing was to raise funds for the hospital. These additional funds helped bridge the gap between the hospital budget for equipment and things the hospital really needed and would like to have but just didn't have the money for.

The hospital, in the early years, was very dependant on charitable donations and the Aid felt that this was where it could be of most service. An annual **Gaben Tag** (gift day) came into being and here noodle soup, potato salad, hamburgers, coffee and pie were served with proceeds going to the aid.

According to the minutes of the first year's activities the Aid bought a cow to help bring down the cost of supplying milk for the hospital and pigs were kept in the hospital grounds so it wouldn't be necessary to buy meat. (They were fed by the nurses who also hoed the garden and cut the grass.)

In June, 1939 the first hospital tea was held. Here, Mennonite noodle soup, borscht and home-baked pie were served and sold at depression prices. Later on, the Aid members catered at chamber of commerce dinners, flower



The Women's Hospital Ladies Aid in the 1950's sewing hospital linens in what is now the Extended Care Unit. Left to right are Mrs. John Wittenberg, Mrs. Peter Rosenfeld, Mrs. Is. Q. Friesen, president; Mrs. Waldon Barkman, Mrs. Art Rempel, Mrs. C. F. Toews, unidentified, unidentified, Mrs. A. D. Penner, Mrs. Henry Reimer and Mrs. Henry Wiebe.

—Carillon News photo

shows and other events. Blankets were raffled, rag drivers were held, and house to house canvassing organized.

Over the years the Aid grew to include ladies from many outlying communities and districts. They gave the hospital thousands of jars of preserves and provided a great variety of services.

With the changing of times the hospital commission took over the hospital and many changes took place. Mending was replaced by a machine the Aid purchased. Home canning was replaced by tinned food stuffs. The large vegetable plot became the site of the nurses' residence.

However, the aid found its place, and continued to be a much-needed organization. Many items such as a dishwasher, washing machines, or heart monitor, breathing machine, compress steamer, inhalators, ice machines, gastric suction, wheel chairs, infant scales, electric ironer, toasters, an isolette, and furniture for the extended care unit were bought and donated.

In more recent years the Aid members have become more involved with patients in the extended care unit and spend time making the patients' stay more cheerful. With the future building of a personal care home the Aid feels that there will be even more opportunities to serve the community.

The Steinbach Women's Institute

The Steinbach W. I. was formed in 1930 with Mrs. J. G. Kornelsen as president and Miss Mintie Reimer as secretary.

It immediately began serving the community in a great many different ways. It raised money for the hospital, sponsored food, nutrition and clothing courses, supplied uniforms to hockey teams, furnished hospital wards and helped needy families.

Another annual effort involved the W. I. booth at the local fair. One time the roof consisted of a few maple tree branches and the inevitable downpour caught the ladies unprepared. When the sun came out after a while, the W. I. members were found on their haunches under the booth's counter and one lady's crepe dress was shrinking visibly by inches.

The W. I. enjoyed 40 years of serving the community and then, in January, 1971, suffering

from a declining membership, decided to suspend activities till fall at which time the organization might be rejuvenated.

In recent years the W. I. helped at blood donor clinics, co-sponsored local art displays, supported a foster child overseas and assisted in various fund-raising campaigns.

The Kinsmen

Twenty-three young men met at Steinbach on December 6, 1950 to form the Steinbach Kinsmen Club. Officers elected for that first year were: George Derksen - president, Ernest Goossen - vice-president, Jim Guenther - secretary, John Schellenberg - treasurer.

Aside from the Christmas hamper project which was instigated the very first year the club was started, the first major projects were: building the kiddies' wading pool and playground, raising funds for crippled children through Easter Seals and special events, providing water and sewage facilities for the hospital, sponsoring swimming classes and purchasing property and donating a cash grant for the start of a school for retarded children.

One of the most involved and satisfying projects for the Kinsmen has been the Kindale School and later the Occupational Centre. Involvement in this project began in spring, 1957 when the Kinsmen gave the Association for the Mentally Retarded a piece of property and \$1,000 to build the Kindale School.

In later years the school's operation was taken care of by the school division but the problem of further training for the retarded adults remained.

Several different buildings were renovated to provide instruction in various handicrafts and woodwork but these all proved to be too small.

On February 17, 1970 the Steinbach Kinsmen passed a resolution to build an addition to the centre at a cost of \$11,500.

The work was completed the same year and the money raised through various campaigns.

The year 1970 also marked the 20th anniversary of the Kinsmen in Steinbach, marking 20 years of valuable service to the community. Looking at the past record, residents could be confident that if the future would be anything near as remarkable as the past for this organ-



The Steinbach Kinsmen in Sept., 1953, launching "Operation Apples," a fund-raising venture which brought the Steinbach Kinsmen pool another step closer to reality.

—Carillon News photo

ization, the community would greatly benefit by its presence.

The Jaycees

The Jaycee movement in Steinbach was officially organized in May, 1960 when 20 of Steinbach's young businessmen gathered to elect an executive.

Denver Fast was elected president, Wilfred Warkentin first vice, Warren Kroeker, second vice, and Ken Betzold secretary - treasurer.

Within a year the organization boasted 18 members and tackled a major project in the form of ambulance service for the community and district. (This service had been provided till then by Loewen Funeral Home.)

The 18-man group agreed unanimously to adopt the ambulance as their own project after hearing Bob Loewen, who spoke on behalf of the funeral home, and Ernie Friesen, chairman of the hospital board.

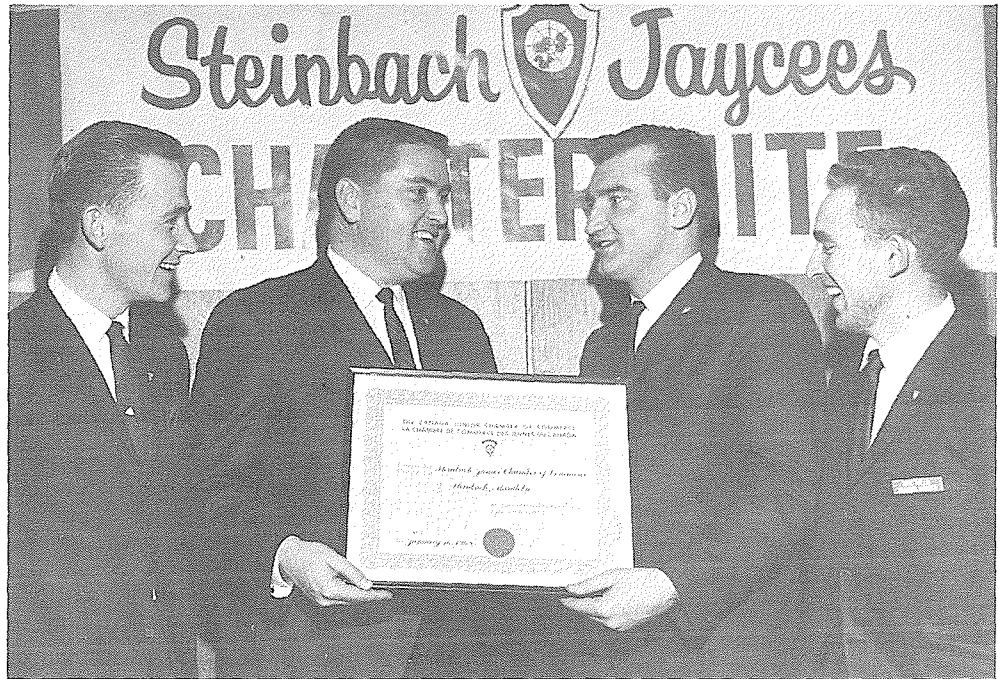
The Jaycees staged a blitz campaign for funds and bought a new, fully equipped ambulance.

For two and one half years the Jaycees provided this vital service to the community and then, in the fall of 1963, asked to be relieved of the responsibility following a period of difficulty due to lack of suitable volunteer drivers.

After giving the ambulance over to the hospital, the Jaycees tackled other smaller projects but several key members had been transferred from the community or obtained employment elsewhere and the organization broke up in 1964.

For two years the Jaycees lay disbanded. Then, in July, 1964, Dave Dollis, a former Steinbach resident who had become a member of the Brandon Jaycees, spearheaded the move for a fresh start. As a result, a new group was organized and the national president came out to present the charter to the Steinbach Jaycee president Bob Hink in January, 1968.

A number of large projects were undertaken in the next few years, notably a winter carnival and a community survey, but the problem of attracting a larger, active membership which had plagued the organization from the beginning, remained.



After reorganization, the Steinbach Jaycees received their charter on January 18, 1968. National president Art Turner made the presentation. Left to right: Ernie Friesen, vice-president; Art Turner; Bob Hink, Steinbach president and Dave Dollis, sponsor.

Steinbach post office established August 1, 1884

The first post office in Steinbach was established in the N. W. ¼ of Section 35, Township 6, East on August 1, 1884.

The postmasters who have been in office since that day are: A. S. Friesen appointed Aug. 1, 1884; Peter A. Guenther appointed 1908; Peter H. Wiebe appointed July 20, 1917; Cornelius F. Barkman appointed May 11, 1920; Neil Friesen appointed April, 1955.

Beginning Aug. 1, 1884 mail was hauled to Steinbach from St. Pierre by horse and wagon. The first contractor was Elie Vinette. On Oct. 1, 1891, Steinbach began receiving its mail from Ste. Anne.

After the building of the Canadian National Railway from Fort Frances, Ontario to Winnipeg, a service was established via Giroux railway station Oct. 1, 1900. This route remained unchanged for nearly 40 years until a direct motor vehicle mail service with Winnipeg,

over the Ste. Anne's Road via Grande Pointe and Ile des Chenes was inaugurated on Aug. 1, 1939. This service was later changed to pass over the Dawson Road via Lorette and Ste. Anne des Chenes on Nov. 1, 1951.

C. F. Barkman

Providing the longest service as postmaster in Steinbach was the late C. F. Barkman who retired from his position on April 1, 1955 after 35 years continuous service. (Mr. Barkman passed away May 10, 1970).

Mr. Barkman was first appointed as postmaster in April, 1920. The appointment was a simple matter in comparison with all the red tape required for acceptance to a civic office nowadays. A petition requesting that he be installed as new postmaster was signed by sev-



The Steinbach post office around 1915 when Peter H. Guenther was postmaster. This building stood at the corner of Main and Friesen where the Penner Tom-Boy parking lot is presently located. For a time J. D. Goossen had his barber shop in the book store department and son Peter operated a shoe shine stand there.

eral prominent citizens and acceptance was granted.

Obtaining the signatures was a simple matter as his qualifications were already well known. He was born in Steinbach, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Barkman, in 1888. He attended elementary school at Steinbach and received his secondary education at Gretna Collegiate. He took normal school training at Morden and for several years taught school at Steinbach and Clearsprings. From 1916 to 1919 he was principal of the Steinbach School.

He resigned from the principalship in 1919 and moved to Engen, B. C. where he operated a grocery store and post office. In 1920 Mr. Barkman returned to Steinbach.

Saw many changes

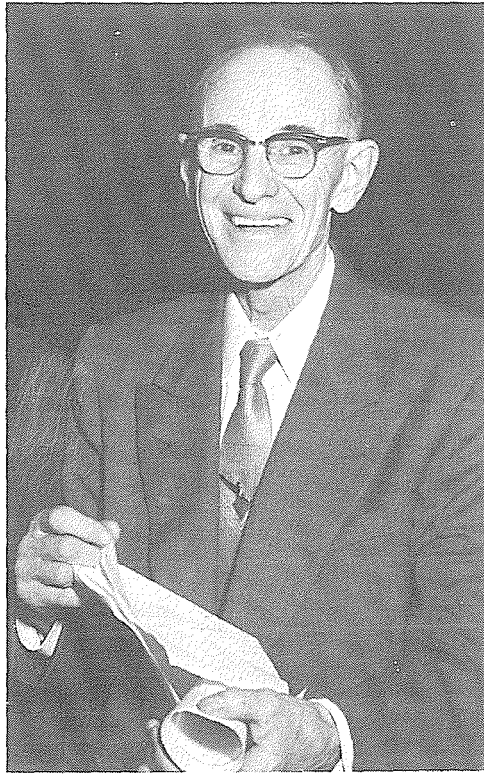
The little 16 by 28 office in which he opened the first bag of Steinbach mail in 1920 was a far cry from the ultra-modern 49 by 62 post office building in which he served during the past few years. The building which contained

the post office also housed professional offices and the local telephone office. These Mr. Barkman later converted into a stationery store which he operated on the side.

The town was small in those days, Mr. Barkman recalled in later years, "and I knew practically everyone. We had about 350 box-holders then. The mail came from Giroux by horse and buggy and we unpacked it late at night."

By 1938 the village of Steinbach had grown considerably and the little post office was no longer adequate. In March of that year Mr. Barkman was installed in an attractive new office on the corner of Main Street and Reimer Avenue built by the Public Works Department of the federal government. By this time Mr. Barkman had two assistants.

For almost 15 years Mr. Barkman carried on his work in this building but in April, 1953 it too had become obsolete and the office was moved to the shiny modern premises which it occupies today.



C. F. Barkman, postmaster in Steinbach for 35 years from 1920 to 1955. This photograph was taken at a postmasters' convention at Brandon where Mr. Barkman was awarded the "Long Service" badge.

—Carillon News photo

Active community life

In spite of his long and steady application to duty, Mr. Barkman found time to hold other community offices. He was a member of the hospital board, past president and director of the horticultural society, charter member and past director of the Steinbach Funeral Aid, committee member and chairman of the board of directors of the Mennonite Brethren Church and past director of the Steinbach Bible Institute.

At a convention of postmasters in Brandon, Mr. Barkman was awarded a "Long Service" badge and in May 1954, he received the Coronation medal from Queen Elizabeth for lengthy public service.

The new post office

Steinbach's present post office was built in 1953. Official opening ceremonies were held on April 9 with government officials and a large crowd of people attending despite a heavy drizzle.

Built at a cost of \$142,222 by Sigurdson Construction Company, Winnipeg, the two-storey, modern brick building served as post office and R.C.M.P. headquarters until 1967 when the R.C.M.P. moved into new headquarters on P.T.H. 12.

A shortage of space was experienced in 1969 when the box lobby became cramped and a long waiting list of people wishing to rent boxes built up.

As a result, B. F. Klassen Construction Ltd. was awarded a \$54,000 contract for additions and alterations to the post office building. Work was completed in the summer of 1970 and 320 more boxes were installed to make a total of 1,954.

One of the reasons more space was required was that Steinbach post office became the distributing centre for southeastern Manitoba in 1967.

By spring 1970 the Steinbach post office had 10 full-time employees including the postmaster and his assistant.

Revenue for 1970 was approximately \$90,600 as compared to a mere \$36.91 taken in during the post office's first 10 months of operation in 1884 - 1885.

Electricity brought a better way of life

History of local light and power

The first lighting plant was set up in Steinbach in 1903 at the Steinbach Flour Mills and A. A. Reimer, now 88 years of age and a resident of the Resthaven Home was the town's first electrician.

At first only the flour mill and the homes of the mill owners were connected but later some other businesses were electrified and some street lamps put up.

The plant, using the direct current system, was not big enough to extend power further than Reimer Avenue but another plant began looking after that area a few years later. In 1909, Friesen Machine Shop purchased a dynamo for their own use and also supplied power to the J. R. Friesen implement shop and John D. Goossen's general store.

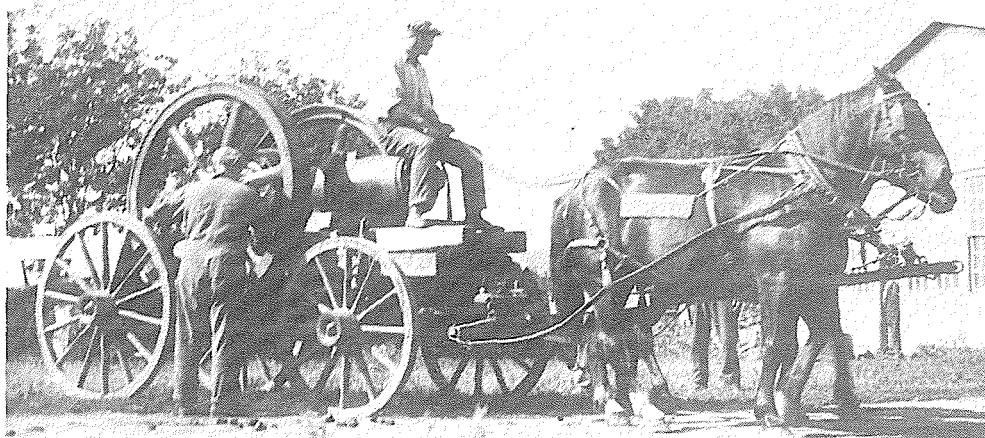
At first the light plant consisted of a six horsepower motor and a set of batteries but then, in 1911, the plant was moved to a Main Street location and a larger, eight horsepower engine installed with batteries and a switchboard. Shares in this venture were sold to other businessmen at this time.

Around 1916, Friesen's found that the small engine was inadequate so they bought a 15 horsepower diesel plus a small auxiliary engine which helped to bear the load during the evenings. At this time the electricity cost 32 cents per K.W.H. The people had to come across with a small fortune for the light bill at the end of every month and didn't like it.

In 1924, Steinbach Flour Mills took over again. They had a 35 h.p. high-speed steam engine by then and provided electricity and even street lights at about 25 cents per K.W.H.

As time went on, this plant again proved to be too small to supply the amount of electricity required by the growing town. Lines were also proving to be too long for D.C. current and while the lights were right close to the generator, they became redder and dimmer as the distance from the power plant increased. Not that this was a fault of the plant, but direct current simply would not carry for any distance.

By 1935 the inadequacy of the system became so apparent that the town board decided to take the matter in hand. The Steinbach Flour Mills hesitated to guarantee the building of a plant such as would be required by the town be-



Bringing a hit and miss gas engine to Friesen's light plant, probably in 1911. This engine proved to be inadequate within five years and was replaced by a 15 h.p. diesel.

—photo by J. D. Barkma

cause money was not plentiful at that time and the project would require many thousands of dollars. However, there was one citizen ready to take the plunge — M. M. Penner of Steinbach Lumber Yards. He guaranteed to put up a system big enough to serve the town with power to spare — if he would get the franchise from the town. This franchise, curiously, was never granted, although Mr. Penner was told to go ahead, which he did.

He ordered two large diesels, 40 and 80 h.p. and when these arrived about a year later, Mr. Penner and his seven sons threw themselves wholeheartedly into the project of erecting the new plant. The huge engines arrived at Giroux in a flat car and without the aid of cranes, were loaded on trucks and then set up in the new light and power building that was waiting for them at Steinbach.

Some idea of the difficulties encountered in this move may be derived from the fact that the fly wheel alone weighed 13,700 pounds, a terrific load for the three-ton truck that carried it. Then, of course, it also had to be unloaded and set in place.

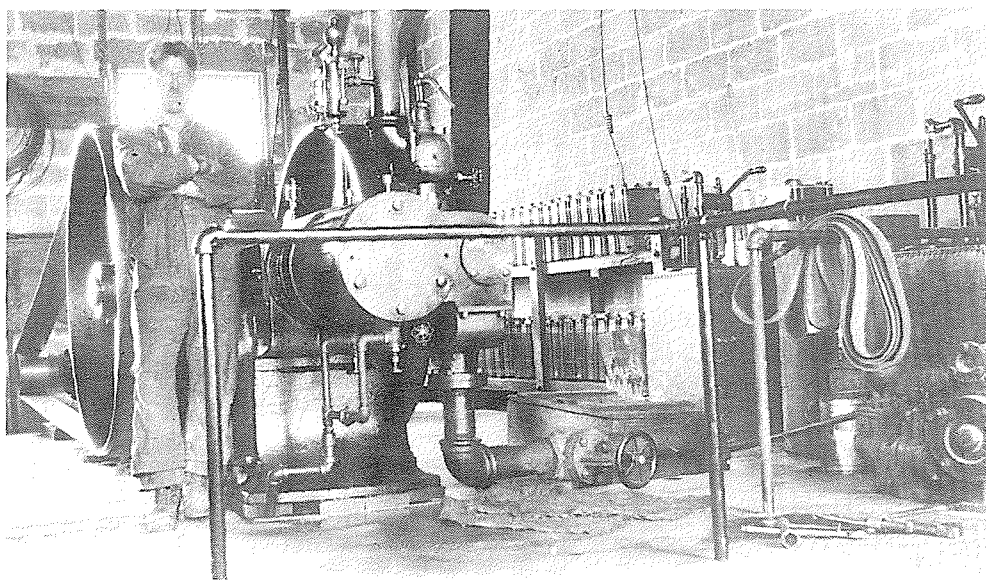
The first hydro pole of the network to cover Steinbach was set up on Oct 1, 1936 and on Dec.

18 the wires were up and the "juice" turned on, marking a new era in the history of Steinbach Light and Power Co. as this subsidy of Steinbach Lumber Yards was called. Rates were 12 cents per K.W.H. The use of electricity soared to an all-time high.

It was only several years later that the Manitoba Power Commission began negotiating to bring their line to Steinbach. They offered even cheaper rates than Steinbach was enjoying at the time and as a franchise had never been granted to Steinbach Light & Power, the municipal council granted a street light contract to the Manitoba Power Commission in 1938. For four years Steinbach Light & Power and the Manitoba Power Commission operated side by side among friends and foes of the two systems until finally the Manitoba Power Commission bought out the Steinbach Light and Power Co. in 1943.

R.M. of Hanover received first hydro power in '46

In 1942 the Manitoba Electrification Commission, which was appointed by the provincial government to study the feasibility of extend-



In 1924 Steinbach Flour Mills again took over the job of providing electricity for Steinbach. Engineer Jacob D. Barkman poses with the steam engine which supplied D.C. power. When the mill wasn't on a 24-hour basis, the battery in the back-

ground was used at night. Street lights, few and far between but strong enough to cast a bit of a shadow, were switched off at 11 p.m. Customers were encouraged to use little or no electricity at night.

—photo by J. D. Barkman



The Steinbach Light and Power Co. building was located where Steinbach Lumber Yards now have their display homes and wood supplies on Lumber Ave., just off Main Street. A subsidiary of Steinbach Lumber Co., Steinbach Light and Power was built in 1936 by M. M. Penner and sons who sold out to the Manitoba Power Commission in 1943 after competing for four years.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

ing electricity to every farm of the province, decided that the time had come to equalize the disparity between urban and rural living conditions. It recommended that electricity be made available to all farms in the province lying within the practical service area.

It was in 1945, following World War II, that the Manitoba Power Commission launched this all-important rural electrification project. At first it started on a test basis. This experiment proved conclusively that farm electrification was feasible and it was decided to proceed with the program at the rate of 5,000 farms per year — a very ambitious undertaking in Manitoba's short construction season.

Due to the shortage of trained personnel and the scarcity of materials, progress was slow at first but finally, in 1948, the goal of 5,000 farms was achieved. The program proceeded at this rate until its completion in 1954.

The R. M. of Hanover was one of the first rural municipalities to receive hydro power. Service was extended to a portion of the municipality in 1946. The balance of the farms received service in 1948, 1950, and 1952.

In the case of the farms, the Commission bore the cost of building the line to a pole in the farm-

yard plus the installation of metering equipment and a transformer which would provide enough energy to run a five horsepower motor. The farmer was responsible for the cost of running the service from the pole to his buildings and the purchase of appliances.

Farmers were required to deposit with the Commission a minimum of \$65 when they signed the contract for service. This amount was later applied on a farmer's purchase of appliances.

Consumer consumption increased steadily

When it was decided that the Manitoba Power Commission would extend electricity to Steinbach in 1938, a 12,000 volt line was built from St. Boniface to serve Ste. Anne and Steinbach. Later, an additional source of supply was guaranteed by the construction of a line from St. Boniface to Niverville.

To meet the demand for greater electrical consumption in Steinbach, the 12,000 volt line between Niverville and Steinbach was dismantled in late fall, 1949 and a new trans-



One of the last farms in the Grunthal-Barkfield area to be hooked up to electricity was that of Jacob T. Martens. Gordon Penner, Manitoba Power Commission representative at Grunthal at the time (1959-60) is seen about to make the connection. The R.M. of Hanover was one of the first municipalities in Manitoba to receive electric power (1948-52, though larger towns within the municipality had it before then) but because of the cost and (or) distrust with which anything new was always met, not nearly all the people were immediately connected up, especially in the rural areas.

—Carillon News photo

mission line, capable of carrying 33,000 volts, was erected. Western cedar poles, thirty-five feet high, were installed to carry the 33,000 volt line and a secondary circuit of 12,000 volts which would serve the farm area in the R. M. of Hanover.

The increase in customer consumption was again evident a few years later when an additional 33,000 volt line was built to the Steinbach area by way of Ste. Anne and Prairie Grove to improve voltage conditions.

In 1950 residents of Steinbach and district paid \$63,983 in hydro fees; in 1955 they paid \$101,291.

Consumption of hydro continued to mount over the years and changed the entire way of life for practically everyone. Farming was completely revolutionized. By 1955 every farm-

er who wanted it had electricity and this new tool enabled him to increase his production tremendously.

The hydro was equally appreciated in town, especially after 1952 when the new federal government budget abolished the 15 percent luxury tax on electrical appliances and automobiles.

First television here in '52

Electricity also brought better street lighting and the mercury vapor lamps and, in 1952, residents peered through the windows of the Tourist Hotel to get their first look at television. The set was a Westinghouse with a 10 inch screen and it was sold to the Tourist Hotel by Alf's Radio and Electric.

Power failures were a part of the early years following the electrification of the area and one of the longest failures in the relatively short history of hydro occurred in the Southeast in Feb. 1958. Power stayed off for four hours and twenty minutes after heavy icing and high winds had pulled down lines in various localities. The H. W. Reimer Store in Steinbach, long noted for its stock of candles and kerosene lamps, reported its heaviest sales of these articles in many years. By the time the power was restored, not a single drop of kerosene, lamp, lantern, flashlight or flashlight battery was left in the store.

The worst storm in the history of the entire Southeast occurred in April, 1964 when gale force winds tore down ice-covered wires and snapped hydro and telephone wires like thread. In this storm there were 300 broken hydro poles, 700 broken telephone poles and over \$200,000 damage to the utilities alone. The area was isolated for 24 hours.

In the 1960's power failures became increasingly rare and the use of hydro so accepted and common place that some new homes were even being heated electrically.

Telephone service

The first telephone service in Steinbach was installed in 1905 between the residences of Peter T. Barkman and his parents, the Peter K. Barkmans'.

The installation was made by A. A. Reimer, later president of Brookside Hatchery and son of A. W. Reimer.

Though this was the first telephone service, at least one enterprising merchant had not waited for the telephone but devised his own unique method of communication prior to 1905. Pioneer merchant Klass Reimer built an underground pipe across his yard connecting his residence with his store and this is said to have worked fairly well for him until he discarded it for the more conventional telephone.

The first long distance government line was strung to Steinbach in 1908 with a small switchboard in the local post office operated by Peter H. Guenther, father of P. S. Guenther.

Soon after this government telephone connection in Steinbach, surrounding rural districts began to build private lines into Steinbach, thus creating the biggest rural exchange in Manitoba. Among many others, C. T. Loewen and John R. Toews were destined to foster and guide this co-operative movement for 30 years.

For some years prior to 1931, the telephone exchange in Steinbach was operated by Peter T. Toews. He sold the exchange to J. W. Fast (the later Justice of the Peace) in 1931 and Mr. Fast operated it till spring of 1944 when he sold it to Vern Barkman.

By 1944 there were approximately 600 phones in the Steinbach exchange and besides Mr. Fast, there were two full-time operators and one relief operator. There was one long distance line to St. Pierre and another to Dugald.

There were considerable difficulties in operating a privately-owned telephone exchange at this time because it was hard to raise the fees and the public demanded service in even those areas where it was not profitable for the owner to provide service.

By early spring, 1946, owner Vern Barkman wished to sell out and it was a question then of whether the town should maintain local control

or have the Manitoba Telephone System take over.

A first meeting of telephone subscribers in and around Steinbach took place March 9, 1948. People at the meeting seemed to be unanimous in their opinion that a good co-operative telephone system was needed.

A committee was formed to investigate the matter and findings revealed the vast majority of people were in favour of local ownership. The next step was - how? Three possibilities were investigated: co-operative ownership, stock company or publicly-owned utility. At one meeting they were inclined towards a stock company. However, when the committee began canvassing for investments, it was found that few investors were interested. Thus, only one thing remained, namely that the town take over.

This report was followed by a lively discussion. It was pointed out that the money for the purpose would not be raised by taxation, but would be paid by telephone subscribers over a period of years. A money by-law would be necessary to raise the money. Mayor Barkman, speaking on behalf of the town council, said that they would be ready to proceed with the matter if the general public was in favour of the idea:

"For the private telephone subscriber, as well as for the businessman, it is highly important that we get more phones on our system, not less. We cannot sit back at the present time and lose part of our exchange here and there. We must look to the future and act at once," said Mr. Barkman.

It was pointed out that rates would have to be higher than at present, but still below government rates.

Rates at that time compared as follows:

	Man. Tel. System	Steinbach
Homes	\$25.00	\$10.00
Business	\$42.00 average	\$22.00

A meeting was to be called by the council in the near future. Should the taxpayers indicate that they were in favour of the town

taking over the exchange then the council would immediately go ahead from there on.

The meeting was called in late March and Steinbach ratepayers almost unanimously endorsed the idea of a town-owned telephone system.

Town council then met to appoint a five-member telephone board to carry on negotiations for the purchase of the Steinbach Telephone Exchange.

Appointed were K. T. Kroeker, A. T. Loewen, Leonard Reimer, Ed J. Friesen and Frank F. Reimer.

Town buys exchange for \$13,000

They reported in late April that they had arrived at a price of \$13,000 for the exchange which was also acceptable to the proprietor. This figure was arrived at on the following appraisal:

Lot No.'s 15, 16, and pt. 17	\$ 1,200.00
Buildings: Office and living quarters	4,300.00
2 switch boards, office furniture and equipment	2,500.00
49 telephones	1,225.80
Cables	1,912.00
44,000 ft. outside drop cord	1,000.08
Chortitz line	600.00
Cable outlets	165.88
Lines 8, 39, 53	1.00
All open lines in Steinbach	1.00
Miscellaneous articles	96.00
Total	\$13,000.00

Though the price had been set at \$13,000.00 council felt that an additional \$3,000 would be required for improvements and operating capital. On June 22, eighty-one of the 540 eligible voters okayed the \$16,000 by-law authorizing the town council to purchase the Steinbach Telephone System. Seventy voters voted for and eleven against.

Improvements were made by the town following the takeover of the telephone exchange but just over two years later, at the last November, 1950 town council meeting, council members delegated Mayor K. R. Barkman and K. T. Kroeker of the telephone board to contact officials of the Manitoba Telephone System regarding the sale of Steinbach's town-owned telephone lines.

The move was made on the recommendation of the local telephone board which felt that the

local set-up was no longer adequate to meet the ever-increasing demand for telephones in the district.

Telephone service was being asked for at an unprecedented rate. There were over 600 telephone users on the Steinbach system alone, overloading the switchboards and lines to the point where it was becoming impossible to render satisfactory service. The two long distance lines were also generally overloaded but this situation was to be remedied as two additional long distance lines through Ste. Anne were made available to the Steinbach exchange. Another drawback to satisfactory service for the district was that under the present charter the Steinbach telephone system could not go out of town for more than five miles. As a result, farmers further away than that but who still considered Steinbach as their logical place to do business had to tie up with the Manitoba Telephone System and every call to town was a long distance call.

Even if this objection could have been overcome by a new charter (which was unlikely) the local system still would not have the funds to carry out a project to build lines into the rural areas.

Because the government already had a great many communities with no telephone service at all on its waiting list, council knew it would be a few years before the MTS could come to look into matters at Steinbach.

By 1955 the telephone exchange had become a huge operation. With C. U. Klassen as manager, lines had been repaired, new lines built and hundreds of new phones installed. When the System was first purchased it had two day operators, one night operator and one relief operator. By September, 1955 the staff comprised of nine operators.

Mr. Klassen's most hectic time came on June 7, 1954, the day of a big storm. At least half of the lines were out of order and Mr. Klassen untangled the masses of wires in only eight days with the help of one inexperienced man.

It was following this storm that the telephone board began to press for absorption in the M.T.S. "We can never pull through another catastrophe like that again and remain solvent," was their unanimous opinion.

Council agrees to have M.T.S. take over

At its February, 1955 meeting, Steinbach Town Council voted to have the Manitoba Telephone System take over the local exchange under terms set forth in a preliminary memorandum agreement. A resolution to this effect was passed unanimously by council.

In speaking to the motion, Mayor K. R. Barkman said he was satisfied that council had the full approval and backing of the town's ratepayers on this move. The telephone board was agreed and the matter had also been brought up at a meeting of business men. And the numerous private persons he had contacted were also fully in favour, he said.

The adjoining exchanges, meanwhile, adopted a "wait and see" attitude towards the outcome of the MTS application for higher rates.

But it was to be a few more years yet before a changeover could take place and in the meantime the Steinbach Telephone Exchange had to do what it could to keep up with the growing community's telephone needs.

Several milestones in local telephone service were marked in 1957.

On August 23, 1957 engineers of the Manitoba System connected the last wires and a Steinbach operator first dialed a number direct to Winnipeg. The change was the first step in a series of improvements that were being planned for the area by the Manitoba Telephone System.

It is doubtful whether anything ever done in Steinbach was received with more enthusiasm than the improved telephone service. "Best thing that ever happened to us since we junked oxen in favor of the tractor," one man who used long distance quite extensively told the *Carillon News*. "At last I know long distance to Winnipeg is faster than driving," stated another.

The new service was faster because it enabled a Steinbach telephone operator to dial the requested number directly to Winnipeg instead of first relaying the information to St. Pierre which was the case before. Likely as not, the lines from St. Pierre to Winnipeg which had to carry all the traffic from South-

REFLECTIONS ON OUR HERITAGE

east were loaded, resulting in call-backs and confusion. The new lines strung from Winnipeg to Steinbach were additional to existing facilities, which meant that all of Southeast was getting better long distance service.

Steinbach operators still had access to St. Pierre lines for long distance on busy days.

First private lines installed in 1957

Another unique telephone service was inaugurated in Steinbach September 30, 1957 when Mayor Barkman dialed the Winnipeg number of the Minister of Public Utilities, the Hon. C. L. Shuttleworth direct from his office to inform him that the new "foreign service" as it was known, had at that moment been cut into service by the Manitoba Telephone System. Also taking part in this first call using the new service to Winnipeg was John D. Penner, president of the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce.

This service meant that it was now possible for firms subscribing to the service to dial from their Steinbach offices direct to any number in the Winnipeg telephone directory without paying the usual distance fee. Anyone in Winnipeg, of course, could call these numbers the same way.

In effect this improved business facility provided 'private line' service between the Steinbach firms and their customers and agents in Winnipeg. Messages from Winnipeg were not accepted for transfer to other Steinbach telephone subscribers; non subscribers to this telephone service still called to Winnipeg using the long distance facilities of the Steinbach Telephone System and the Manitoba Telephone System trunk lines.

By 1957 there was only one other rural telephone area in Manitoba — Selkirk — where similar service had been installed. Although fees for the local private lines were quite high, around \$1,600 a year, the business firms subscribing said that they expected to pay less than they did for long distance tolls. Others who subscribed to the new service said they believed it to be an inexpensive way to break in on a huge potential of Winnipeg business that they had been unable to touch before.

Steinbach firms that subscribed to the new service were Barkman Hardware, J. R. Friesen & Son, C. T. Loewen & Sons, Loewen Garage Limited, Penners Transfer, South East Transfer, Reimer Agencies, Penner Motors, Penners Garage and P. B. Reimer's.

The most important announcement of all in 1957 came in August when officials of the Manitoba Telephone System announced that they had completed plans for the establishment of an exchange area in and around Steinbach.

Excerpts of the plan were:

Steinbach was to become the toll operating centre for automatic switchboards at Kleefeld, Greenland, Niverville, Chortitz and Blumenort. Dial operation was approved for Steinbach, Kleefeld, Greenland and Niverville.

Highlights of the timetable of construction indicated that the present telephone building was to be moved back in April, 1958 and construction on the new building started. This was scheduled to be ready on Dec. 31, 1958.

Target dates set for retiring present exchanges were:

Blumenort and Greenland - November, 1959; Chortitz and Kleefeld - June, 1960; Niverville was to come into the system as an additional C.D.O. in June, 1960. The district of Sarto was also considered as a possible community dial office, which could be connected with the Steinbach system.

Construction did not proceed on schedule. In February, 1959 the M.T.S. took over the new exchange building and crewmen finished laying the underground cable which replaced the overhead wires. Cables capable of serving a city of 50,000 were laid in three weeks of bitterly cold weather. The crewmen worked mostly in the manholes which linked the pipeline network they had built the summer before.

M.T.S. switchover took place November 23, 1959

At 10 o'clock Monday night, November 23, 1959 the Manitoba Telephone System switched from the old manually-operated telephone system which the town has used for over half a century, to a new streamlined automatic exchange. The Steinbach Telephone Exchange was sold to the MTS for a token payment of one dollar.

The new automatic service which incorporates what the telephone people call "two letter - five number dialing" swung into action after a full year of careful planning and a great deal of hard work by the dozens of technicians, contractors and laborers involved.

Taking into consideration all local, rural, tool plant, land, buildings and telephone equipment in Steinbach, Ste. Anne and Greenland, the cut-over cost close to one and a half million dollars.

The Steinbach Exchange area now took in 130 square miles of territory. It was bordered on the north by Ste. Anne and Greenland, on the south by Sarto and St. Pierre, on the east by La Broquerie and on the west by Greenland and Kleefeld.

Central dial offices were built at Ste. Anne and Greenland by the Manitoba Telephone System shop department at a cost of approximately \$8,000 each. The central office equipment and installation costs amounted to more than \$60,000 for these two offices.

The \$239,000 worth of new dial equipment in the Steinbach Exchange represented the most up-to-date telephone apparatus available and operated on what is known as the two letter, five numeral plan. This plan enabled all subscribers to complete a call in their respective exchanges by dialing the directory listed number.

A new eight-position switchboard allowed Steinbach operators to handle a larger volume of calls much more quickly. For instance, when a subscriber in Steinbach placed a long distance call to a city or town which has dial accepting equipment, the operator at Steinbach was able to dial straight through to the number the subscriber had given. This was known as Operator Distance Dialing.

Long distance circuits increased at cut-over time giving 15 circuits available to Winnipeg, five to Ste. Anne, three to La Broquerie, two to Greenland, two to Dugald, and two for St. Pierre. Telephone users found the new telephone facilities a tremendous help in their business and community affairs giving them a faster, more convenient link with their capital city.

Steinbach became the parent exchange for Ste. Anne, Greenland and La Broquerie, which are central dial offices. Also homing on this exchange were Chortitz, Kleefeld and Wood-

ridge. This meant that subscribers wishing to place long distance calls from these offices obtained assistance by dialing the operator at Steinbach.

The switchover took place in the handsome \$125,000 one-storey brick telephone exchange on Main Street. The 62 by 94 foot building was designed by F. W. Sawatzky, Ltd., St. Boniface and construction had been completed in April, 1959.

Several hundred people crowded into the new telephone building to watch the ceremony connected with the switchover. Others listened to the entire program over CFAM.

Those taking part in the ceremony included Mayor L. A. Barkman, Hon. J. B. Carroll, Minister of Public Utilities; J. F. Mills, commissioner and general manager of the Manitoba Telephone System; Edmond Prefontaine,

M.L.A.; W. H. Jorgenson, M.P.; C. U. Klassen, manager of the Steinbach Telephone System; and Jac. A. Penner, president of the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce.

The week before the switchover, town council gave formal recognition to three men who had served the telephone board for twelve years. They were K. T. Kroeker, Frank F. Reimer and A. T. Loewen.

Another community — Grunthal — officially joined in the Steinbach free-dialling system in 1966.

Direct distance dialling came in 1969. Nearly 3,000 telephones in the Steinbach exchange switched over to direct distance dialling on August 10. Greenland and Grunthal followed suit on August 17 and August 24 respectively and Kleefeld and Niverville received this service in September.



Moving day for the Steinbach telephone office took place in April, 1958. The town-owned telephone system office was moved back from its Main Street location to make room for construction of the new MTS building. Telephone exchange manager C. U. Klassen is at right. Operators, left to right, are Mrs. Sue Barkman, Mrs. Darlene Klassen, Mrs. Doreen Friesen, Miss Dora Doerksen and Mrs. Rose Esau.

—Carillon News photo

Waterworks boosted growth

A census in 1956 showed Steinbach had a population 2,688 people. By the end of 1963, when the area north of the northeast Townline Road became part of Steinbach, the town had close to 4,500 inhabitants.

It is more than coincidence that this unprecedented expansion so closely paralleled the installation and expansion of the town's waterworks system.

The experience here is similar to that of other towns in Manitoba which have invested in waterworks. It has proven the key to commercial and population explosion.

A venturesome step

The decision to take on the waterworks project in 1955 meant laying a debt of \$183 on every man, woman and child in the town for the next 20 years. It was a venturesome step but the town council at that time made it plain that it could see no alternative if the town were to continue to grow.

In urging his fellow citizens to take on the challenge, the-then-mayor, K. R. Barkman, listed better fire protection, possible attraction of industry and personal convenience as the three main reasons. The alternative, he said, was a drastic halt to progress.

Chamber of Commerce president, John D. Penner, had other reasons for urging that the town go ahead. Citizens were already paying the costs of waterworks, he said. It cost \$10,000 a year to clean out cesspools. Some 30 homeowners in his area paid \$50 a year for their own privately-operated waterworks.

Seven and a half years later, events confirmed these arguments. Fire insurance rates in the area served by sewer and water dropped by one third soon after installation.

In places where a dwelling was located inaccessible to a hydrant, rates were approximately 10 cents more per \$100 of insurable value than rates on a home within reach of a fire hydrant.

During the big fire which destroyed the Evangelical Mennonite Church in March, 1960,

firemen were able to use the plentiful supply of available water to save the new \$130,000 church building right beside it.

Industrial and commercial expansion since the installation of waterworks included the construction of at least two large new factory buildings, a large modern garage, and a killing plant.

Stimulated growth

After January 1, 1957, the record of building permits issued showed more and more building concentrated in the area served by sewer and water. The "waterworks boom" provided continuing work for that part of the town's population which drew its livelihood from the building trades.

Personal convenience, probably the most difficult benefit to express in figures, was the greatest benefit of waterworks. Any town mother giving her offspring their Saturday night bath in a new tub for the first time with hot running water, backed that claim. And those who suffered the affliction of fighting their



Excavation for the waterworks project on Steinbach's main street in 1956.

—Carillon News photo

way through a snowdrift to an outdoor privy in a January blizzard were just as quick to agree that personal convenience alone justified all the costs of a waterworks system.



Steinbach streets were a nightmare of gumbo and water puddles during the installation of water and sewer pipes in 1956.

—Carillon News photo

The costs

The year long construction project cost the life of one man. Peter Driedger of Barkfield was crushed to death beneath a tractor which toppled into a seven-foot ditch in which he was working on Main Street.

What was the cost to the taxpayer and to the individual? The ratepayers voted for the waterworks on Dec. 16, 1955 with 367 favoring the proposal and 136 opposing. Just a year later the water was turned on.

A waterworks debenture of \$428,480 - the biggest financial deal ever made in the town's history - was sold to the firm of Mills, Spence and Co. The interest rate was 4½ percent. It was called the lowest interest rate at which debentures of this kind had been sold in the province for some years. The debenture was repayable in 19 years and four months.

By December, 1956 costs had risen to \$515,000 and another \$90,000 debenture had to be issued. In 1959 debentures were issued for \$55,000 in 1960 for \$75,000 and in 1961-62 for \$232,000.

The town imposed three different levies to cover the costs of the system:

1. There was a general levy over the town at large of a fixed amount of \$9,820 per year. It started with three mills in 1956. Due to the increase in the town's assessment it went

down in later years.

2. A special levy on the area serviced by water and sewer began with 11 mills but the rate varied from year to year as the system showed profit or loss.

3. A frontage levy of 10 cents per foot for water and 10 cents per foot for sewer is a fixed rate over a 20-year period.

Profits on the system to the end of 1961 had amounted to \$32,000.

At the end of 1962 there were 938 residential units in town, 675 of which were connected. There was almost 100 per-cent commercial connection with 113 places of business on the system.

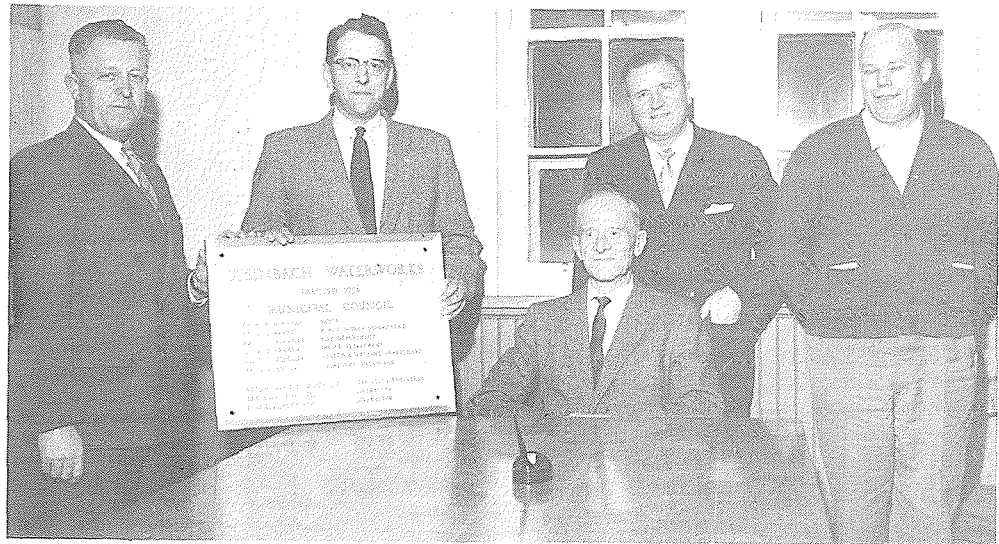
Unlike such towns as Altona, Gretna and others in western Manitoba who purchase their water from a government-owned water system, the town of Steinbach is the sole owner of its system and the money for it has come entirely from the taxpayers without the assistance of any government grant greater than regular winter works project assistance.

Source of Steinbach's water supply are two deep drilled wells both tapping a plentiful



Mayor K. R. Barkman turned on the first hydrant in Steinbach in October 1956. This was on Hanover Street, at the northwest end. At this time there had been 10 miles of pipe laid, 30,192 feet of sewer, 27,588 feet of water main, 83 manholes and 59 hydrants.

—Carillon News photo



Steinbach town council at the time the huge waterworks project was completed consisted of: left to right, J. H. Brandt, L. A. Barkman, K. R. Barkman (mayor), A. D. Penner and I. W. Kroeker. Ratepayers approved the \$428,480 project 367 votes to 136 on December 16, 1955.

—Carillon News photo

underground spring at about 252 feet. Combined capacity of the two wells is 900 gallons per minute.

Natural gas came to Steinbach in 1957

The natural gas which flowed into Steinbach on December 4, 1957 arrived over the partially-completed Trans-Canada Pipeline, one of the largest engineering feats ever undertaken in Canada.

The gas arrived via the 12 miles of pipeline laid between Steinbach and Ste. Anne. It quickly filled the 30 miles of medium piping through town and the additional uncomputed miles of service pipe.

With its arrival, Steinbach realized its goal of "all the advantages of the big city" while retaining the advantages of the small community.

With 265 service lines connected immediately, residents felt they had something which could compete with the ever-rising costs of oil heating which had spiralled almost continuously since being introduced after the war.

Installation costs in Steinbach for gas ran between \$350,000 to \$400,000.

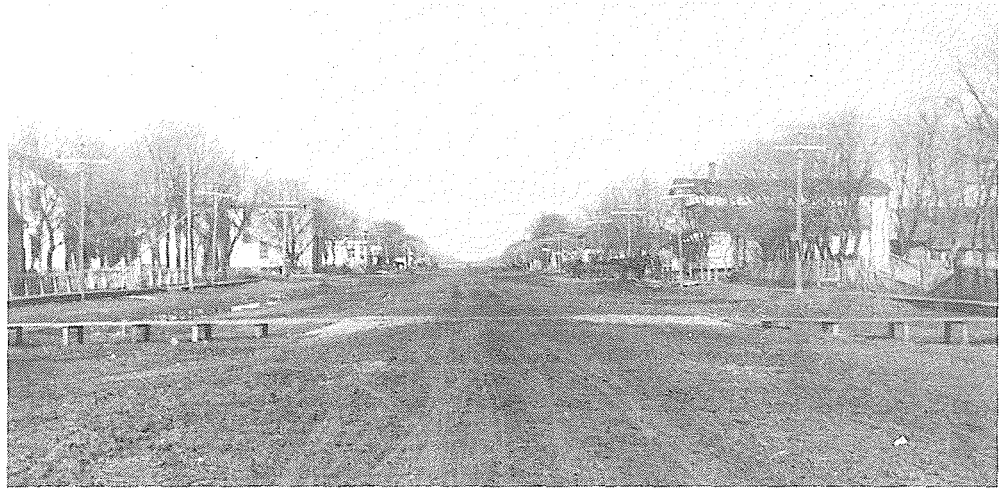
Negotiations for bringing gas to Steinbach began in the summer of 1956 and the town eventually accepted Inter-City Gas Company's proposal to install a system without calling for tenders. At that time the company agreed to lay the mains and install as many service lines as possible while the streets were still in a state of upheaval due to installation of waterworks.

Steinbach streets

Main Street was chopped through the bush

The first Steinbach settlers chopped a road through the brush to build what is today Stein-

bach's Main Street in the fall of 1874. In the first years this street was just a muddy trail wide enough for two wagons to pass if the drivers walked ahead rather than alongside their oxen. In wet weather the streets became a morass of mud and water and when it dried, there were ruts and ridges that made even the



Main Street, Steinbach looking north, probably around 1916. Along the left side are, left to right, the P. T. Barkman residence, the H. W. Reimer store and another general store operated at this time by a Jew whose name can no longer be determined. The K. Reimer store is on the right side of the street where the horses are hitched. Concern for the pedestrians is shown here at this Lumber Ave. crosswalk. Not only is the wooden sidewalk raised well above the ditch but gravel has been spread on the ground.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

main street a bumpy thoroughfare.

Improvements came slowly. More and more gravel was applied over the years and this gradually built up into a stable base for the various types of horsepower the streets were accommodating after the turn of the century.

Greatest improvements on local streets probably came in the early 1930's, especially 1933, when a total of 1,324 yards of gravel was applied. When one takes note that the town ended that year with a total reserve of \$325 one can understand that any funds to improve streets or other facilities in these Depression years were hard to come by.

The long wooden sidewalks that kept pedestrians high and dry started disappearing during these same years. By 1934 many sections were getting very old and slowly being replaced by concrete.

By 1941, the need for more concrete sidewalks became more urgent as the result of community expansion. Most badly needed was a concrete sidewalk from the old school to the collegiate, a distance that some 300 students were walking four times a day with mud up to their ankles.

Another problem in the same time period was the lack of town planning. People with

property for sale were not allowing room for streets. As a result, sometimes, a man bought a lot and the only way he could get on or off his property was by driving over his neighbour's lawn.

The need for street signs and several more avenues from Main Street to Hanover Street also became apparent in the late 1930's.

Dust problem tackled in '39

The terrible dust problem on Steinbach's Main Street wasn't tackled until 1939. By that time local businessmen and residents were so fed up with the clouds of dust that were raised by every passing vehicle that they donated funds to have the street chemically treated.

The problem of water run-off on Main Street came to a head in 1941. The wet summer that year showed up the places where the water couldn't run off and as a result, it was decided by council to level it in these areas and build a curb. The surveying was done by K. W. Brandt and the building of the curb followed as fast as weather permitted. The expenses

were not paid by taxes but by the owners of the individual lots.

Preparation to build up Steinbach's Main Street to standards for asphaltting began September 4, 1947. A huge government grader with scarifier began taking out dirt along the sides which were later filled in with a clay and gravel mixture and then packed to bring the base up to specifications for hard surfacing.

Preparation for the work cost the town around \$2,500. Hard-surfacing cost \$30,000.

Two years later, in 1949, the town of Steinbach was pleased to hear that it had won top honors for beautification in its class in the annual Manitoba Town and Village Beautification contest sponsored by the Manitoba Good Roads Association.

Another milestone in the history of street improvement came in February, 1951 when town council completed a deal they had been

contemplating for a long time, namely the buying of a small road maintainer. The new machine was an Allis-Chalmers Model D maintainer and cost \$5,600.

Since the town did about \$1,000 worth of road maintenance work annually, plus a good amount of snow plowing in winter, council estimated the machine would pay for itself in seven years.

The early winter of 1952 saw the beginning of the building of the Creek Blvd. (later renamed Elmdale) which opened up scores of building lots in the heart of the community. This was followed, in the next eight years, by an ambitious paving program.

On the year of incorporation (1947) there were 5,500 feet of sidewalk, much of which was later rebuilt. By fall, 1964, the town of Steinbach boasted three paved miles of street with concrete sidewalks.



In the early 1930's the wooden sidewalks started disappearing in Steinbach. In 1933 a five-foot wide sidewalk was built from Friesen Ave. north to where Loewen Pharmacy now stands on Main Street. This photograph shows the sidewalk crossing Main Street where we have the Friesen Ave. and Main Street intersection today. At right, on the site of today's Goossen block, we have the Royal Bank building and J. D. Goossen's offices. Mr. Goossen was secretary-treasurer of the R.M. of Hanover and this is where he had his insurance office as well as the municipal offices. Note the man in knickerbockers and the hitching post.

The building at left, the Steinbach Hall, has a brief but colourful history. A man by the name of Harry Schwartz bought this building in the 1930's. He put in a new floor and sponsored dances but a lack of swingers forced the owner to seek new revenue. An outside church group held some meetings in here for awhile as well but after these petered out the building was sold.

Street names

A by-law changing old familiar street names was enacted in August, 1956 and with the by-law went names of such streets as Creek Road, Moscow and Chamberlain.

Some names were changed in order to make

the house numbering system work out better. In other instances, numbers were substituted for names. Under the by-law all streets south-west of Main Street received numbers.

Today, the general attractive appearance of the streets, together with the well-taken-care-of homes and yards, make Steinbach one of the most attractive communities in the province.

The story of the Pietenpol and other flying machines

One of the most exciting chapters in the history of the area centres around the development of the sport of flying. Nothing so completely captured the imagination of the people as the first flying machines.

The first attempts to become airborne here came around 1917 when one of the most successful of the local inventors, Isaac B. Plett, tried to launch a helicopter. This was 20 years before the first successful machine of this nature was built anywhere and Mr. Plett also had considerably less success with this project than with his many other inventions.

When the day came for the take-off, it was found that the Model-T engine taken off Mr. Plett's car lacked the power to take the machine off the ground.

This first defeat was talked about for years and oldtimers would chuckle about Mr. Plett's "machine" and tell each other over and over how "if the Good Lord intended for us to fly we would have been born with wings."

Until 1931. Then, behind the closed doors of the J. R. Friesen garage two mechanically-minded sons-in-law of owner J. R. Friesen, as well as his own son Edwin, began work on the second attempt to build a flightworthy aircraft in Steinbach. Both Bill P. Wiebe and Frank W. Sawatzky were employed at the garage and the whole grand adventure had started when they ran across the plans for a home-built airplane in a magazine. The plans were drawn by a man in the United States by the name of Pietenpol. As it turned out, they couldn't have fallen into more eager or productive hands; Wiebe and Sawatzky both possessed a flair for anything mechanical.

Times were slack in those depression years and work at the garage often scarce. As a result, Mr. Friesen offered to supply the funds for the venture and to build and sell further Pietenpols if the first proved successful.

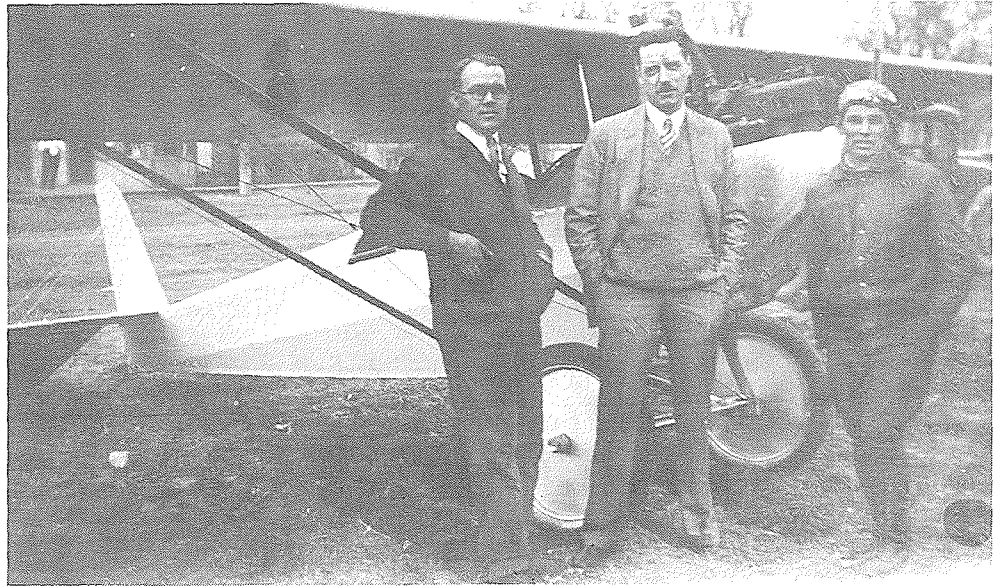
Thus, in the rear of the J. R. Friesen Garage, work began. Money was very limited and practically everything had to be built. Bill Wiebe designed and built an air speed indicator from a coil spring. He also designed and built an excellent tachometer for recording R.P.M.'s of the motor from an old auto speedometer.

Though the first propeller was purchased, all the others were built entirely by hand from hard white ash. The skis for winter use were built the same way. The summer undercarriage was constructed from old motorcycle wheels and a straight axle.

For power they used a rebuilt Model A. Ford engine which they souped up by using a high compression head. They also stepped up its power by means of a special carburetor. They got rid of the old cast-iron Model A manifold and built new ones of a lighter aircraft metal. They also did away with the battery and installed a magneto ignition to lessen weight.

During the winter, while the boys worked on their embryo flying machine, it became necessary to keep the doors of their garage locked at all times. "Otherwise people would be climbing right on top of the machine out of curiosity."

Mr. Wiebe recalled in later years how the pastor of his church came to him one day with an open Bible in one hand and solemnly enquired as to what text he should speak on at



Wm. P. Wiebe, left, and Frank W. Sawatzky, right, with Frank Brown, ex-World War One pilot who test-flew the first Pietenpol airplane on May 2, 1932. The aircraft was dismantled in later years and some parts of it sold. It hung in the J. R. Friesen shop for many years.

—photo courtesy Ed J. Friesen

his funeral. Others were equally pessimistic of the outcome of such an unheard of piece of folly. Incidentally, the same minister, a few years later came around and wanted a ride.

When the machine was completed, two Department of Transport officials came down to investigate. One of the inspectors favoured rejection of the application for a license. The other was more lenient and said, "Well, let's at least look at the thing". After they had inspected the Pietenpol, the inspectors agreed that some modifications would have to be made. Many of these changes meant the installation of heavier bolts. At that time the government was probably trying to discourage the makers of home-built airplanes.

Finally came the day when perseverance and ingenuity won out, and the inspectors were forced to admit that they could find nothing technically wrong with the craft.

Hundreds watched the maiden flight

With the okay from the inspectors, a few more finishing touches were added. 10:00 a.m. May 2, 1932 was set as the day and time of the

maiden flight of the Pietenpol.

The day dawned clear and what was probably the largest crowd of people ever to assemble in southeastern Manitoba to that date gathered in a field back of the present Kornelsen School on Second Street.

Earlier that day some of the businesses, the school, and even some of the domestic and farming activity in the area had ground to a halt.

Back in those days when the horse and buggy still represented the most common form of transportation, the launching of an airplane on its maiden flight seemed an earth-shaking event. Even today it still ranks as a matter for deep wonderment that two farm-raised country boys could build an aircraft to the standards of scientific aviation engineering, all from some old plans they had unearthed in a 25-cent mechanical magazine.

Old men shook their heads in pessimistic disapproval and partial disbelief, but they could not hide their curiosity. Young men surged eagerly around the glistening, silver "Pietenpol" for so its builders and owners had named the aircraft after the designer of the original plans.

A murmur of intense excitement rippled

over the surging crowd as Bill Wiebe and Frank Sawatzky, co-designers and builders swung the prop, and the souped up Model A Ford motor sprang to life. Into the cockpit stepped Frank Brown, ex-World War R.A.F. pilot who had agreed to testfly the wonderful home-made machine. Small boys from the farm, and even some of the older folks, wondered how anyone could be so brave.

After pulling on his goggles and revving the motor, Braun crossed the field several times on the wheels. The second time it appeared as though the wheels lifted a little off the ground. The third time the crowd cheered as the plane actually took three to six foot jumps into the air.

Then the pilot stopped the plane and got out. "All is in order," he said, and lit a cigarette. The next time he'd take the machine into the clouds.

Finally, as the crowd waited excitedly, the cigarette was flipped aside and the pilot returned to the cockpit. A quiet settled over the people as the machine rolled down the field and then soared up over the telephone wires.

It was a proud moment for Steinbach and the builders of the airplane, Sawatzky, Wiebe and Ed. J. Friesen. The plane circled the town at a height of 500 feet and speed of 75 m.p.h. It performed beautifully and all doubts and fears that had manifested themselves in previous years dropped away as the plane climbed and soared.

Proud were not only the builders of the plane but J. R. Friesen himself, who, some 21 years previous, before assisting this project, had led the community in another enterprise by introducing the automobile.

First licensed pilot in Steinbach was Frank Sawatzky. Second was Ed. J. Friesen who first flew the aircraft on June 22, 1933.

Several thousands attended first fly-in

Tremendous interest in flying was generated by the successful maiden flight of the Pietenpol and only 10 weeks later, on July 16, 1932, 14 planes and several thousand people converged on the small village for Steinbach's first fly-in.

The planes were on a goodwill tour of Man-

itoba and Saskatchewan and various types of machines were present. When all 14 were airborne, the people were amazed at the grand and rare sight.

Several parachutists also jumped on this occasion and rides over Steinbach were sold at \$2.50. The same evening saw Steinbach witness its first boxing match. Ten boxers, two of whom were local, participated.

Though the Pietenpol never crashed, there were many times when it appeared this is what would be the ultimate fate of the machine. In later years two more local boys, Art B. Reimer and Jake Fast, learned to fly in this first airplane.

The most harrowing experience for the Pietenpol and one of the pilots, Frank Sawatzky, came on December 28, 1932.

The airplane had been damaged on take-off at Altona on December 26 due to an uneven landing field and needed a new propeller. New parts arrived December 27 and the next day the weather was stormy so they didn't wish to fly the plane back home. However, just to check out the repairs, the men decided to make a test run on the ground. As the plane went down the field, the wind picked it up off the ground and carried it up against the wishes of pilot Frank Sawatzky.

The storm tossed the plane in the air like a toy and the pilot knew that a crash landing was probable if he tried to bring it down there. If he had to come down fast and furious, he decided it might as well be at Steinbach, so he pushed the stick back and began a zig-zag course east.

It was a terrible journey with the winds and consequent tossing about never ceasing. A really horrifying moment came at Morris in one of the ravines at the east side of the river. Here the wind suddenly slammed the plane into the ravine and a crash onto the rapidly-approaching wall seemed imminent.

At the last moment the plane tore out of the death path and tossed up again, only a few feet away from the telephone wires.

Sometimes the pilot was unable to tell sky from earth — the visibility was that bad. He noticed at St. Pierre that he was far too low and had to squeeze between two houses at one point.

Throughout the journey it was all he could

do to keep from falling out of the plane because he hadn't strapped himself in.

Four miles from Steinbach, at Ebenfeld, he became very tired and decided when he saw an opening in the bush beneath him that here was where he would have to meet his fate.

Perhaps the bush broke the force of the wind but forever what reason, the plane made a good landing. Just as it stopped, however, and Sawatzky was preparing to heave a great sigh of relief, a strong gust of wind picked the plane up and tossed it on its back. The pilot was thrown out and the propeller was broken once again.

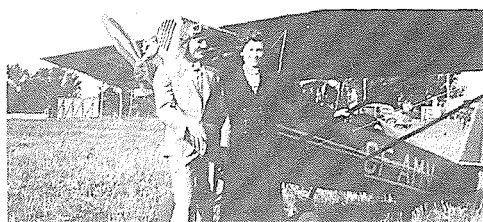
The Corben Junior

Encouraged by the success of the Pietenpol, builders Frank W. Sawatzky and Bill P. Wiebe began work on a larger model around December, 1933 in the premises of J. R. Friesen & Son. The new model, the Corben Junior, was a cabin plane with a 34 foot wingspan and an 88 horsepower motor (compared to the Pietenpol's 28 foot wingspan and 50 horsepower motor).

The second plane was completed in March, 1934 and the maiden flight had to wait till the spring sun dried the pasture.

Just as the first airplane, this one was also hailed as a local phenomenon and people enjoyed seeing both in the air over Steinbach at the same time.

A few years later, yet another machine was



This is locally-built aircraft number three. Mr. and Mrs. Ed Friesen are in foreground. This photo was taken in 1938, the day that the German consul from Winnipeg came out to see the local boys fly. This model was sold to some air force personnel after the Second World War. It was taken to Winnipeg and was destroyed when the building in which it was stored burned.

—photo courtesy Ed. J. Friesen

built. This was a modified version of the Pietenpol and first flew in March, 1935.

First plane crash in 1934

The first plane crash at Steinbach occurred during the 1934 air show and sports day. A squadron of three visiting planes were doing a stunt called "Prince of Wales Feathers" when the middle aircraft suddenly plunged down and made a somersault very low above the ground. The plane did not have the momentum to go up high enough nor the distance to go for another loop. It crashed before the eyes of horrified onlookers. Though the plane was badly damaged, the pilot Bill McFee, walked out of the wreckage with only bruises.

As a result of the crash there were not quite as many passengers for rides as usual that day.

For the benefit of the crashed plane an airplane movie was shown at Penner's Hall September 7, 1934. The movie was called "Ace of Aces" and featured famous actor Richard Dix. According to an advertisement in the Steinbach Post, it was a "blazing tale of clash and combat."

First and only air tragedy in 1948

Many years of flying in the area passed before a tragic plane crash on Mother's Day, May, 1948, took the lives of two youths.

Killed were Lloyd Friesen, 18, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Friesen of Steinbach and Tommy Sawatzky, 17, of Altona.

The boys were hurled to their untimely deaths when the two-seater Aeronca Champion they had rented suddenly did a half-roll and fell into a spin while doing a tight bank at an altitude of 100-150 feet just west of town.

Though local pilots were also involved in crashes or bad landings, no further deaths or serious injuries were involved.

As the years following the appearance of the first aircraft over Steinbach passed on, the Pietenpol and the other planes gradually faded from the skies and the white trails of jets marked a new era in air travel.

Many Steinbach and area residents got their first close look at jet aircraft in August, 1954



The arrival of the jet age. Hundreds of people in Steinbach and other points in the Southeast thrilled to the sight of 12 RCAF jets as they roared over Steinbach in August, 1954. An RCAF tour of western Canada was carried out to give Canadians an opportunity to see the planes.

—Carillon News photo

when 12 RCAF jets thundered over Steinbach during a tour of Western cities.

Then, in 1960, the first evidence that the air age had invaded Steinbach in earnest materialized with the building of a permanent airstrip on the former H. H. Peters farm just south of Steinbach on P.T.H. 12. Purchased by John D. Penner, the land on which the airstrip was being built was permanently leased by A. D. Penner.

Although the new airport was at first occupied by only one plane - that of Penner's Construction - a rapidly-growing interest in flying saw more and more planes being purchased by local and area businessmen.

By October, 1964, only one year after the Steinbach Flying Club was organized, there were already 30 licensed pilots as members and the club had just purchased its second club-owned aircraft. Club members, some of whom were residents of surrounding communities, owned a total of 13 planes. At least six of these were regularly based at the Stein-

bach airfield.

The "fly-ins" also increased public interest in flying. Thirty-three planes crowded into the Steinbach airport at the first fly-in in October, 1963. Highlight of the afternoon was the breathtaking display of precision flying and acrobatics by the RCAF's Red Knight, Flying Officer Bill Slaughter. An estimated 2,500 people saw the show.

Sky-diving was another related sport that enjoyed some brief popularity but because of the cost and inherent danger (real or imagined) this died out after a few summers.



Skydivers at the Steinbach Fly-in, October, 1964 were left to right Dwight Reimer, Steinbach; Bill Sheldon, St. Catharines, Ontario; Brian Kliever, Steinbach; Jacques Callens, St. Boniface and John Henry Friesen, Steinbach. Though skydiving was a popular spectator sport it failed to draw a sufficient number of participants and slowly died out in the early mid-1960's.

—Carillon News photo

Old air field inadequate

While numerous improvements were made to the airfield south of Steinbach throughout the 1960's, it was inadequate for a number of reasons. It was not long enough (the main runway was 2,500 feet), there was too much bush surrounding the field, and the smell from the town nuisance grounds made the area gen-

erally less attractive than it could have been.

As a result a 10-man syndicate began work in the spring of 1967, motivating the general public to support the huge project of building a large new airfield and golf course at a new location just north of town.

Members of the Golf-Air Limited syndicate were and remain: A. D. Penner, John Barkman, E. J. Friesen, Jake and Bob Banman, John Choate, Vern Fast, Peter J. Reimer, Dave Voth and C. P. Loewen. Together they purchased the 122-acre section bordering P.T.H. 12 beside the Mennonite Village Museum for \$40,000.

By mid-November of 1967 a total of \$23,000 worth of shares had been sold to about 60 different people and sales continued.

One of the biggest promoters of the airfield-golf course was automobile dealer A. D. Penner. Back in 1960 he'd become the community's newest and most enthusiastic flyer. Then shortly after having received his license, he went up with employee Ron Dueck to deliver the payroll to his construction crew working at Libau. Flying a brand new Cessna 182 four-passenger plane, Mr. Penner was coming in for a landing at Libau when a gust of wind took him off course. The plane was completely

demolished but both occupants were uninjured.

Though the crash put a damper on Mr. Penner's flying career for awhile, it wasn't too long before he was in the cockpit again and agitating for better airfield facilities.

In November, 1967, work began on the new airstrip and it was the same Mr. Penner's equipment that was doing the work at cut costs. Being built was a 2,680 foot airstrip and a 1,300 foot cross-strip.

Besides the airstrip, hangars and clubhouse, a 122-acre nine-hole golf course was included in the plans.

Work on the complex proceeded favorably and in November, 1968 the Steinbach Flying Club members began relocating at the new field.

Official opening of the golf course-airport complex took place October 13, 1969. The opening was held in conjunction with a fly-in that saw 79 aircraft and some 1,700 people visit the new grounds. The new golf club, professionally landscaped and one of the finest in the province, was completed that fall.

The airfield, with landing strips, fuel pumps and approach lights and eight private hangars, awaited even further development in future years.



The Steinbach Airpark was officially opened by local and government officials Oct. 13, 1969. The airpark was a credit to the efforts of the 10 man syndicate formed in April and May, 1967 for the purpose of building the complex and in particular to A. D. Penner, third from left in this photograph, whose machinery, literally, got the project started.

—Carillon News photo

The battle to remove the beer parlour

The consumption of alcoholic beverages has been a traditional taboo for members of the Mennonite Church and although Steinbach has had a beer parlour almost continually since the early 1930's, concerted efforts have been made on several occasions to close the present parlour and lay groundwork to make certain no other outlet could be opened in the future.

The strongest move to close the beer parlour in Steinbach came on August 15, 1950 when a petition was presented to Steinbach town council asking members to submit a local option by-law to the vote of the town's 1,036 electors.

The 'hot potato' was dropped into the lap of the council by A. T. Loewen who acted on behalf of the 239 petitioners.

In a statement to the press, Rev. Ben D. Reimer, one of the principal promoters of the petition, said the chief reason for trying to cut out the beer parlour was "to take away the temptation from the younger generation. As Christianity it is our duty to take a definite stand. We cannot remain silent because silence means assent."

J. Peters of the Tourist Hotel said he would close the doors of his hotel if the by-law passed. Date for the vote was set for October 20, 1950.

Support for both sides polarized slowly over the intervening seven weeks before the vote but the issue was treated carefully.

The week before the vote, on October 13, the petitioners brought out Rev. Gerald E. Splinter, well known Jamestown, North Dakota radio minister, for a temperance rally at the Steinbach Gospel Tabernacle. This was followed the next Thursday by temperance meeting conducted by Chas. N. Nees of the Manitoba Temperance Alliance.

The other side put up little visible defence. The Tourist Hotel issued a letter asking for consideration of the hotel's clean record and the Northwest Travellers Association further urged support for the hotel in an advertisement in "Die Steinbach Post."

On the day of the vote, October 20, most predictions toppled as tallied returns showed 398 people voting for the sale of liquor and 214 against. Only 54.6 percent of the eligible

voters exercised their franchise but the matter was settled.

Nothing more came to fore on the liquor matter until September, 1954. At that time a report by the Manitoba Retail Merchants Association stated that 99 percent of all merchants favoured liquor sales across the counter of general stores.

A questionnaire, in connection with the Bracken Liquor Inquiry Board, was mailed to all members of the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce.

The resulting poll indicated that Steinbach merchants were 100 percent against selling beer or wine across the store counter.

Of 34 businessmen polled, only two favoured mixed beverage rooms. Thirty were against liquor advertising and 12 said they believed the government should prohibit the sale of liquor altogether.

Agitation for a liquor commission in Steinbach began a few years after this when councillor Ike Kroeker began bringing up the idea in council. The mayor and some of the councillors felt that this wasn't something to be pushed however and councillor Leonard Barkman (later mayor) probably said what most felt at the time when he stated at a September, 1957 meeting: "Let's keep away from this liquor business; we have enough to do without it. We'll hear enough about this when some interested party will promote it for himself."

The next move to keep liquor out of the community and municipality came two years later. In the second week of January, 1959, members and adherents of twenty Mennonite churches in Steinbach and the R.M. of Hanover signed a petition directed to the Liquor Control Commission of Manitoba. The petition expressed the opposition of the signers to the building or operation, now or at any future date, of a liquor store in Steinbach or in the R.M. of Hanover.

The petition contained several thousand names. It was inaugurated by the Mennonite Ministerial Association of Southeastern Manitoba after a committee appointed to study the matter reported that the Liquor Control Com-

mission has the power to open a government-owned store in the community at any time without recourse to a referendum. Rev. Archie Penner of the Evangelical Mennonite Church and one of the committee said that while the Ministerial Association knew of no application being filed to open a liquor outlet here, there was reliable evidence that some people wanted it. "We wanted to voice the feelings of ourselves and our members on this issue so the Liquor Control Commission would know where we stand."

It seemed to be the opinion of church members who signed the petition that, like a life preserver, it would be better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

No liquor commission or any other legal

liquor outlet of any kind besides the Tourist Hotel exists in the municipality to this date (1971) although outlets at La Broquerie, St. Pierre and Ste. Anne, just outside the municipality, get a great percentage of their trade from residents living within the R.M. of Hanover.

The easy access to alcohol in all forms at these places and in Winnipeg have eased off pressures to open local outlets. Though many residents in Steinbach and the municipality would prefer the convenience of a local liquor store and licensed restaurant, many of these people are aware of the opposition and hard feeling the promotion of such outlets would cause and are content to leave matters as they have been for half a century.

From a district joke to \$13½ million... the story of the Steinbach Credit Union

Oldtimers in Steinbach will remember with some amusement a certain chamber of commerce meeting held in the village one evening back in the depressed mid-Thirties. The chamber had invited a prominent co-op organizer from west of the river at Altona as guest speaker. They had heard that this man was a promoter of a new kind of organization called a credit union. No one in Steinbach knew anything about the subject and they hoped to learn something that would help solve the desperate financial situation which everyone was then facing.

The speaker arrived, got up on the platform and launched into his speech. He did not lack for gifts of oratory but after he got wound up he launched into a scathing denunciation of the monstrous capitalists and grasping businessmen. Credit unions, he said, were an instrument in the hands of the common man to free himself from the shackles of big business. Most of the businessmen in town found things tough enough without competition from co-ops. By the time the speaker finished, the largest part of the audience had cleared out.

Such was Steinbach's first introduction to the credit union movement. That was also to be the end of it for quite some years.

The villagers and farmers of the district

plodded wearily on through the rest of the dusty, toil-fraught depression decade without ever hearing another word about the credit unions. Even among the older, more established businessmen, things were difficult but they still managed to keep afloat by resorting to all kinds of economy measures. Among the emerging group of younger men with energy, ideas, talent and a yearning to get ahead, things were a whole lot tougher.

Many of them had reached and passed the age where they would dearly have loved to get married, raise a family and start a business of their own. Others, struggling on the farm, longed to be able to buy just one new implement to replace the junky old relics they had been repairing all through the depression years. But loans of any kind were simply not available.

One of this younger group happened to be the son of the local printer, Eugene Derksen. Some of the reading he did concerned an offer of free literature about credit unions by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. There were a few paragraphs to the effect that these credit unions had proven highly successful in depressed areas by helping people onto their feet financially.

Mr. Derksen sat down and wrote to the Wheat Board for the literature and when it came back, showed it to a few of his local

friends, among them P. J. Reimer, Joe Penner, A. T. Loewen and others. They agreed to form a study group and give the literature a thorough study. By the time they had finished, they all agreed it might be worth a try. With the idea in mind of eventually forming a local credit union, a place where people of modest means could pool their resources to help each other financially when that help was needed, the study group decided to approach a few other men they thought might be sympathetic.

Free enterprise approach

Right at the very outset they decided that they would present the credit union to the public not as a co-op movement which they felt would condemn it before it started but as something that would boost and further private individual enterprise. In this they proved themselves wise planners and it may well be that a different decision could have foredoomed the fledgling enterprise to failure.

These fathers of Steinbach's Credit Union well knew that anything which even smelled of socialism was lost before it started.

It was a small but hopeful group of men who gathered in Room 3 of the old No. 1 School on the evening of May 20, 1941. It was not possible for them to know it then but the results of that meeting eventually changed the banking structure of Steinbach and in a broader sense, revamped the whole economy of southeastern Manitoba.

The men were: Ed B. Reimer, A. K. Reimer, Herman Neufeld, Eugene Derksen, Jac. H. W. Reimer, John Hoepfner, Dav. K. Schellenberg, Joe T. Penner, the late P. D. Reimer, Dave Pankratz, P. D. Friesen, A. T. Loewen, John D. Loewen and Henry K. Reimer. A. T. Loewen served as chairman and P. J. Reimer as secretary.

After numerous difficulties which arose from the members' inexperience with finance and banking, the necessary charter was obtained and the little credit union group launched on its great adventure.

Eugene Derksen was president and P. J. Reimer secretary. At that time Mr. Reimer was working as clerk and bookkeeper in P. K. Penner's transfer office, a small place about the size of a large packing case, situated on Main St. just south of the present Steinbach Hatchery. Here, crowded into the corner of a drawer



Steinbach Credit Union members paid tribute to surviving charter founding members at the Jan., 1964 annual meeting. Seated in front is Rev. P. D. Friesen. Left to right are A. T. Loewen, Herman Neufeld, Joe Penner, Eugene Derksen, K. J. B. Reimer and Jac. H. W. Reimer. Missing from the picture is P. J. Reimer and two men who were already deceased at the time this picture was taken, Paul Friesen and Aaron Reimer.

—Carillon News photo

in a five-cent scribbler, he kept all the records of the credit union, carrying it on as a sort of occasional sideline when he had nothing to do. "I just used to go around town once in a while," he once recalled, "and pick up 50 cents here and there."

Several businessmen didn't want to accept the first cheques. The "financiers" were still regarded as something of a district joke.

One of the new financial organization's first tasks was to elect its officers, directors and committees. When the ballots were all counted, the membership had elected the following: president - Eugene Derksen, first vice president - Jac. H. W. Reimer; secretary - P. J. Reimer.

First credit committee - Albert Frey, Joe Penner, K. J. B. Reimer, G. S. Derksen, Ben P. Toews.

First directors - Paul Friesen, J. H. W. Reimer, P. D. Reimer, Eugene Derksen, P. H. Reimer.

First supervisory committee - P. J. B. Reimer, Herman Neufeld, P. D. Friesen.

Maximum loans

At a meeting on May 29, 1941, the maximum size of a loan was set at \$25 and the maximum number of permissible shares that one person could own was \$25.

At a meeting on June 5, on a motion made by E. Derksen, the Steinbach Credit Union issued its first loan. The amount was \$25 and it was issued to the late Ben P. Toews. Mr. Toews was in the trucking business and the money was used as a part payment on a second-hand truck.

Other loans made in the first month of the Credit Union's operations were to A. K. Reimer on June 22 for \$20, to A. P. Toews on June 14 for \$25, to John K. Schellenberg on June 16 for \$20 and to Eugene Derksen on June 19 for \$15.

Fines — five cents

Among the interesting items found in the minutes of the first summer's meetings were the following: August 2, 1941, it was decided to levy a fine of five cents when a payment on a loan was three days or more late and to move

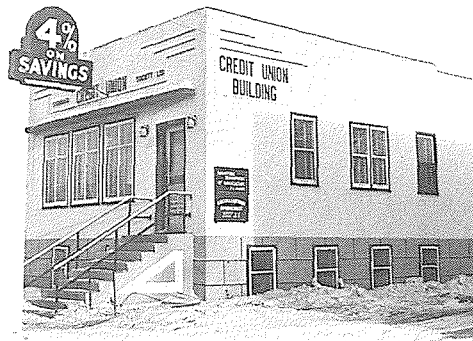
the place of business from Penner's Transfer to Loewen Garage. Richard Kliewer was to act as secretary. September 8: The maximum amount of a loan was increased to \$50 with a time limit of not more than five months to pay. November 11: Moved that 70 cents be paid to the **Steinbach Post** for printing 100 membership application cards. January 13, 1942: Moved by the president, E. Derksen, that the interest rate on deposits be set at four percent as of January 27, 1942.

At the first annual meeting, G.G. Kornelsen moved that the six percent interest be paid on shares. E. Derksen resigned as president and Ben P. Toews was elected in his place. P. J. Reimer was elected vice-president, A. T. Loewen as general manager, and Richard Kliewer as assistant manager and secretary-treasurer.

Ben P. Wiebe, who served for many years on the credit committee, recalled that he got his first loan of \$50 in the winter of 1942 and used it to buy a truckload of fish at Westbourne. He peddled the fish and sold it for \$100, then bought another load. By spring the Credit Union had helped him into a better financial position than he had ever been in his life before. "Before the Credit Union came," he said, "I couldn't borrow a cent anywhere else." His was the same experience as that of many others. It was small wonder that they became credit union enthusiasts.

As it was, many thought the new group of "amateur financiers" as they were referred to, would never get very far past first base with their petty little peanut deals. And first it looked as though the critics might be right. The entire earnings of the organization from interest on loans during its first half year of operation amounted to only \$17.07. Dividends paid out amounted to \$9.49 and that didn't leave much profit.

But the ever-increasing members' savings that flowed into the Steinbach Credit Union grew in the second year to a little stream. In the third year they became a big stream. In 1943, interest earned worked out to \$343.47. Time went on and the stream became a river that threatened to flood its banks. By the summer of 1946 the business was being handled in John R. Unger's barber shop on Main St. and he had his daughter working a good part of the time to help him but the volume of work



This first Credit Union building was opened Nov. 25, 1946. It is the Evangel Book Store today.

—Carillon News photo



The Hon. Errick F. Willis, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba officially opened this second Credit Union building in March, 1960. He alluded in his speech to the success Steinbach has achieved as the "Automobile City" and remarked that he himself had bought some of his cars here. With reference to the new building the Hon. Mr. Willis said that he doubted that there was another such fine money-handling establishment in the province at the time.

—Carillon News photo

was so pressing that it was decided to hire a full time manager. Paul Reimer took the job that summer but before long he couldn't handle it alone and the board of directors hired Jake Sawatzky Jr. to help him.

It soon became apparent that there wasn't room for all of Mr. Unger's barber customers and the Credit Union customers as well in one tiny building and so the members took the big plunge and decided to erect their own building at a cost of \$12,000. This was a stupendous sum in those days. About this same time Jac. D. Reimer, the present manager, took over the job.

The new building opened officially on Nov-

ember 25, of 1946 with a great drive to get new shares and \$100 being offered as prizes.

From 1946 on, the story of the Steinbach Credit Union has been one of continuous and almost phenomenal growth. In 1960, with the grand opening of a magnificent \$100,000 building, total assets amounted to a staggering \$2,382,498.16. The value of shares on deposits alone amounted to \$1,738,052.04. The number of shareholding members had grown in just 19 years from the 10 charter members to a total of 3,367, the largest in the province.

The next 10 years showed even greater growth. Every year the Credit Union was able to provide additional services until almost one-quarter million cheques a year were being drawn on current accounts.

By December, 1970, assets totalled \$13,522,262. The Credit Union, at this point, had 7,400 members and rates for 1971 were seven and a half percent on savings and eight percent on loans.

Enjoying the confidence of the membership, the Credit Union is backed with a nearly \$1 million reserve and in 1970, loans since inception totalled \$68½ million.

"A. T. Loewen did more than any other man"

In retrospect there have been a number of men whose dedication to the welfare of the Credit Union have resulted in its great growth over the years but one man, even among these, stands out:

A. T. Loewen was a guiding figure in the Steinbach Credit Union for 25 years. Starting out as a charter member of the organization in May, 1941 he served in just about every office there was, including president.

At the January, 1971 annual Credit Union meeting at the Steinbach Collegiate his widow was honored by the first president of the organization, Eugene Derksen, who stated in part:

"It was exactly one year ago, January 26, 1970, when Mr. A. T. Loewen passed away. One can hardly imagine an annual Credit Union meeting without Mr. Loewen coming up with some idea that would be of benefit to Credit Union members.



In recognition of 20 years service to the board and various committees of the Steinbach Credit Union these members received appreciation awards in the form of framed certificates in Nov., 1965. Left to right: Jac. D. Reimer, Ben F. Wiebe, A. T. Loewen and Joe Penner.

—Carillon News photo

"I can say without hesitation and reservation that Mr. Loewen did more for the Steinbach Credit Union than any other man. He was the driving force behind the first Credit Union building when the organization was still in its infancy; and again he was the key force in promoting the present building, which has done so much to give the society the prosperous look which it deserves.

"Mr. Loewen was a charter member when the Credit Union was formed in 1941; and he continued to serve on the board, in one capacity

or another, without intermission from that time on to the time of illness prior to his death.

"Always his efforts were directed to improving some phase of Credit Union operation; either in bookkeeping, procedure or promotion. It was always for the cause, never for personal gain.

"As a small token of esteem to this man, the Board of Directors has asked that on their behalf, and on your behalf, I present this corsage to Mrs. Loewen who is with us here tonight."

7. Sports and recreation

Though Steinbach grew to be the model Mennonite community—probably the most progressive on the prairies—there remained one area in which both the residents and the business and church leaders had failed over the years and that was in providing the youth of the community with proper recreational facilities.

Though newcomers to the community often worked tirelessly with a few local groups to build a better skating rink and organize more complete sports programs, their efforts were often for naught and frustrations sometimes became monumental.

This problem was not confined to Steinbach. Other Mennonite communities had similar experiences but the lack of facilities was not always as apparent there because these communities were much smaller.

Though other nationalities were hardpressed to understand the situation, any student of Mennonite history could have explained it. It dealt with the Mennonite religion and a passion for hard work. Life for the Mennonites had always meant work, hard work, with the only time for rest coming on Sundays which were dedicated to worship. Frivolity of any kind was generally frowned upon and the only social activities permissible for years involved church functions.

And while it might be understood that these were beliefs practiced way back before the turn of the century, one need only be reminded that the local Kleine Gemeinde church passed a resolution in 1937 advising “believers” not to partake in sporting events to realize that it was not just a handful of church elders who believed that the evils entailed in sports far outweighed the good.

While this line of reasoning has changed considerably over the years it is still sometimes noticeable in the community today and was certainly a powerful force in every aspect of sport in Steinbach for the last 97 years.

Though visitors to Steinbach today may laud the fine arena and modern golf course the construction of both have come only very recently, after years of promotion and work by a handful of men.

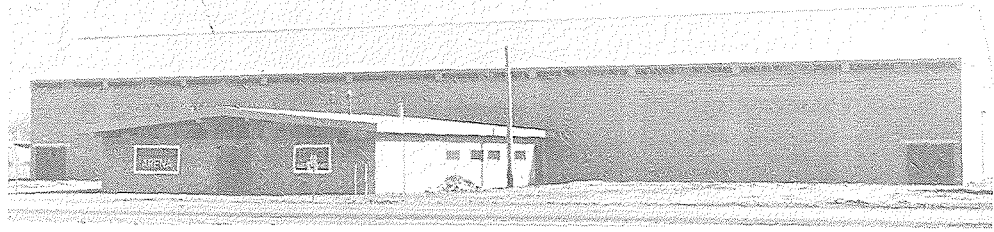
The battle for the Steinbach arena

Determined efforts to upgrade local sports and have an arena built in Steinbach began as far back as 1946 and 1947.

In the Jan. 2, 1947 issue of the *Carillon News*, local banker and sports promoter T.G. Smith wrote a letter to the editor which said, in part: “Steinbach is a thriving, progressive town but our citizens display far too much apathy in meeting the problems which confront our

young people. Let us provide our children with recreational facilities, properly supervised, in premises which we can all be proud of. Who is willing to get the ball rolling for a modern, properly supervised community recreational centre including a skating and curling rink?”

Mr Smith got his answer the next week. A. Friesen, in a letter to the editor, spoke for a lot of people when he said there were already enough outlets for the young people in the form of prayer meetings, choir practices and other church activities.



The Steinbach Arena, officially opened in February, 1967.

—Carillon News photo

At one meeting in Steinbach that same winter someone remarked that mothers did not want to let their children skate because they were apt to learn bad language. Mr Smith, who was president of the rink committee, agreed that parental supervision was necessary and challenged parents to devote one night a week to come out and help supervise.

No one accepted the challenge but by then the need for better facilities was recognized by a few individuals and a recreational club was organized. Though this provided some valuable outlets for boys aged 10-15, it didn't solve the rink problem and the problem consequently grew.

The outside rink, in 1947, was far from adequate even in those days and the rink committee kept prodding the public into support for closed-in facilities.

Support was not forthcoming, however, and so the Steinbach Playground Association, an inter-church organization which was to direct organized skating and hockey facilities in the community for the next 19 years, was formed.

For a number of years this Association supplied two sheets of ice on First Street for pleasure skating and hockey under adult supervision. In 1960, after plans for a gymnasium and two outdoor sheets of ice fell through, they opened new facilities on Creek Road, the site of the present arena. Included in these new facilities were a lounge area which is presently annexed to the arena and three outdoor sheets of ice with flood lighting.

The Association provided a valuable service to the community but in an era in which small neighboring communities were already building enclosed arenas, this was still not enough.

Recreational Committee formed in 1959

Efforts to obtain better winter sports facilities began coming from other organizations and individuals in the community in 1958. In January of that year, it became apparent that some of the younger businessmen at least were facing the need for greatly improved recreational facilities. An unprecedented motion by the chamber of commerce was passed at the annual meeting. To be forwarded to town council before the 1958 budget was drawn up, the resolution called for a one-mill tax to be reserved for building a recreation centre.

Council, however, chose not to push the matter.

By 1959 the need for a recreational centre had become apparent to nearly every organization in the community and 25 of these organizations including the chamber of commerce and women's institute formed the Steinbach Recreational Committee. Principal purpose of the new organization was twofold: (a) to take in hand existing recreational facilities in order that they would be used to the fullest extent and (b) to offer leadership in the construction of a community centre.

In an ambitious mood, the committee in 1960 drew up plans for a \$500,000 community centre which would include a large auditorium, a curling rink and a skating rink. Plans were changed, however, when the divisional school plan came through which provided for a large auditorium area. Later, it was also deemed more advisable to build a separate curling rink.

After some prodding by members of the recreational committee, town council set the



Ice rink facilities in Steinbach in the 1950's were something less than adequate as this photograph dramatically illustrates. It wasn't until 1960 that better facilities in the form of new dressing rooms and three well-lit sheets of ice were constructed by the Steinbach Playground Association.

—Carillon News photo

fall, 1961 elections as the time for local residents to vote on the \$125,000 sports arena.

The RM of Hanover came out in support of the project but now the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce, which had spent great sums on the ball field and generally supported sports, balked.

At a meeting just a few weeks before the vote, members indicated overwhelming opposition to the project. It was generally felt that the \$125,000 cost would put such a drain on the town finances that it would make businesses move to Winnipeg.

Almost like a lone voice crying in the wilderness, Peter S. Guenther begged the gathering not to think only in terms of business but to think of the family relationships that could be built through good sportsmanship and the enjoyment of mutual interests by families. But his voice wasn't heard and the arena by-law was defeated 318 votes to 162. Observers who watched the election said there was a marked increase of elderly volunteers coming in after 3 p.m., to make sure the vote would not carry.

As a result of this defeat the calibre of local hockey declined. Senior Steinbach teams had to rent space in either the tiny La Broquerie or St. Pierre arenas if they wanted to play in the bigger leagues and attract crowds.

By early 1966 the Steinbach Recreational Committee was ready to promote another vote. Seven community groups gave full support and council set July 25 as the date for the \$95,000 by-law.

Though only 26 per cent of the eligible voters turned out, the vote carried. The final tally was 345 to 141 against. The arena was officially opened in Feb., 1967 with 2,000 people in attendance.

Less than a year later, in September, 1968, Steinbach ratepayers voted once again on a recreational by-law. This time it was for a \$60,000 floor and ice plant for the arena. This vote also carried, 405-105.

The successful completion of the arena in Steinbach was a monument to T. G. Smith, who, more than anyone else, instigated the project and inspired and united the people of Steinbach to support it.

The Dominion Day celebrations

The Dominion Day or July 1 celebrations at Steinbach are to this day the biggest annual event in the entire Southeast.

The July 1 sports day of today is a chamber of commerce outgrowth of an "Air Tour" start-

ed by the Young Men's Section, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce in 1930 "for the stimulation of interest in civil aviation".

This tour, which consisted of some 25 light planes, first came to Steinbach in 1933 and returned in 1934. The show included various demonstrations such as formation flying, mock aerial combat, bombing and racing. It drew tremendous crowds and those who remember these flights say it would do the same today.

However, the group was disbanded and the promotion-minded businessmen of the day — including the late J. R. Friesen, J. E. Regehr and M. M. Penner — decided that Steinbach must have a day such as this every year. The date was switched to Dominion Day and the celebration has been held on that date ever since.

It is interesting to recall that the J. R. Friesen firm had their own plane in this tour for two years. It was a Pietenpol type, powered by a model A engine. It was flown the first year by Bill May, later transport pilot for BOAC who brought a plane-load of blankets to Winnipeg during the flood of 1950 and the second year by Carl Ross, who later flew a plane for the Loyalists in the Spanish Revolution. Pat Reid, who led the tour during both years and his wife, were both killed in a Moose Jaw air crash in 1954.

The original air tours not only prompted Steinbach businessmen to put on their own annual day but it made them so airplane-conscious that the present sports and agricultural grounds were bought "to establish a landing field".

In the years following, members of the entertainment committee spent many hours trying to find suitable entertainment for the "Big Day". One great find was Nick Czun, a parachutist. For several years he thrilled the crowds by going up some 5,000 feet and allowing himself to drop some 2,000 feet before pulling the ripcord.

One year Mr. Czun brought out a large balloon, 40 feet in diameter, in which he planned to go up for his parachute stunt. The balloon was laboriously filled with hydrogen and almost ready to fly when the volatile gas ignited and the balloon caught fire. One man was nearly burnt to death and the crowd stampeded, but it didn't hurt future events at all.

In those days ambitious young men set up



For several years parachutist Nick Czun thrilled the large crowds at the annual Steinbach July 1 celebrations. He so inspired young Peter Guenther, presently sales manager at Penner Dodge Chrysler that he jumped off the barn with a home-made parachute and broke his arm. This picture was taken the year after Mr. Guenther's unsuccessful jump and shows young Peter receiving a bit more first-hand information about parachuting from Mr. Czun.

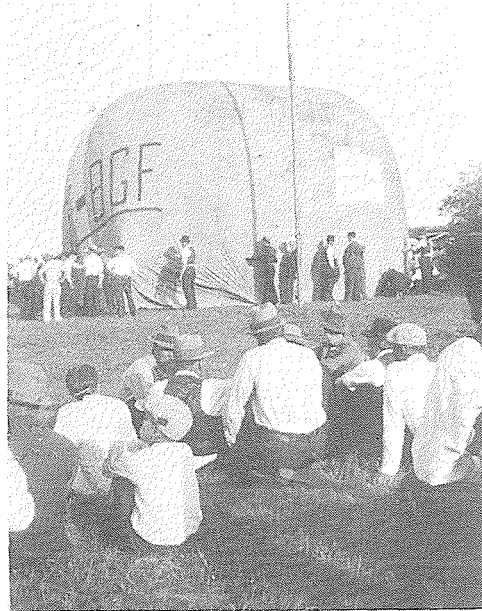
People who attended the July 1, 1937 Dominion Day celebrations will also remember Mr. Czun for the huge balloon which he brought with him that year to carry him aloft. Inflated on the grounds with highly inflammable hydrogen gas, it was ignited by a spark and exploded.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther

side shows that haven't been duplicated to this day. There was one, "Hit the fellow in the eye", with a very real young lad as a target. Customers could buy three fresh eggs for a quarter to try their skill. Another year it was a "Duck Sambo" gimmick. Eggs had gone up in price and baseballs were used to hit a bull's eye which dumped a local fellow into a big tank of water. Ernie Toews, originator, builder and barker at this show, is now a prominent business man at Saskatoon.

When the war came, Nick Czun became a parachute instructor and later went back to his trade of marble polishing. So far Steinbach has been unable to duplicate that single

tremendous gasp and the crackling suspense that held the crowd mesmerized from the time



People who attended the July 1, 1937 sports day in Steinbach will still remember the added excitement provided by Nick Czun and his balloon. With a record crowd in attendance to watch the daring balloonist, Mr. Czun had the large bag which was to have carried this aloft, inflated with hydrogen gas. (See top picture.) Suddenly a spark from somewhere ignited the gas and up went the balloon in flames.

—photo courtesy Herman Neufeld

that Nick Czun leaped from his plane to the time he pulled the ripcord in the days of the old tours but the crowds have grown never-the-less until some 5,000 holidayers annually file through the admission gates at Steinbach's big sports day. Perhaps the thrill of seeing the home team win or the villain in the wrestling match getting pinned does not ruffle the nerve ends as did Nick Czun's flirtations with death, but the cotton candy tastes the same and the conversation is a friendly, wholesome thing.

'47 Sports Day drew 7,000

Perhaps the largest sports day in Steinbach's history occurred on July 4, 1947 when 7,000 people passed through the gates, drank 8,736 bottles of pop, and ate 10,300 ice cream cones, nine bunches of bananas, 1,920 chocolate bars and 6,000 hot dogs.

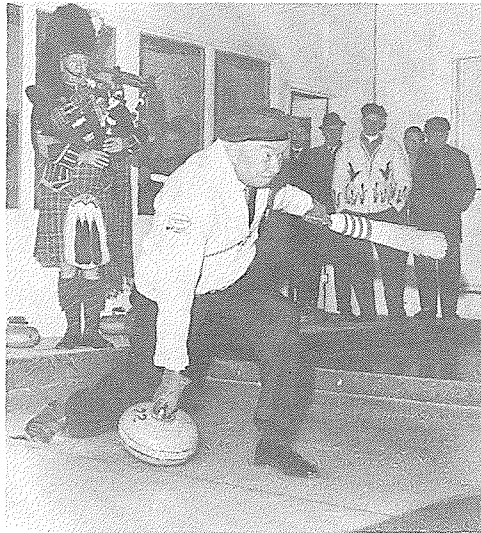
Steinbach curling club organized March 20, 1948

"In summer they work their fool head off and in winter they curl it off. I have almost come to the conclusion that curling may yet be the downfall of the farmer."

This was Jake Schultz, president of the Manitoba Farmer's Union, speaking at Steinbach to a meeting of farmers in March, 1952. He said that he had made that statement following a meeting in a western town where only the local secretary had turned up. The rest of the farmers had been at the curling rink, curling day and night. With a bottle of Crown Royal in their pocket the farmers paid little heed to the problems confronting their industry. Mr. Schultz was trying to make the point that if farmers didn't look after their own problems, they surely couldn't expect anyone else to do it for them.

Well, perhaps the local farmers took heed because they certainly prospered and the curling here remained more of a sport for the local businessmen than for farmers.

The Steinbach Curling Club was formally organized on March 20, 1948. The following members were elected to hold office for one year: patron - Rene Jutras, M.P.; president -



With bagpipes wailing and some of the more avid Steinbach curling fans in attendance, the then-Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. Errick Willis, threw the first rock to officially open the new Steinbach Curling Rink in the winter of 1963-64.

—Carillon News photo

Robt. L. Scarrow; first vice president - Dr. M. R. Hodgson; second vice president - Ronald Kreutzer; sec. treasurer - J. P. Schmidt; executive - Dr. R. W. Whetter, Ed. J. Friesen, Frank Sawatzky, Jac. Fast, and Jac. Peters.

The executive was given authority to purchase a lot and organize the building program.

The curling rink was built that summer by volunteer labor. Spark-plug for the whole effort was Bob Scarrow of Steinbach Dairy assisted by Judge Fast, Joe Schmidt, Reg Sanders and many volunteers. The \$5,000 required to buy lumber was obtained by selling 200 shares at \$25 apiece.

The first curling bonspiel held by the Steinbach Curling Club took place January, 1950 and 25 rinks from Steinbach, Ste. Anne, St. Pierre, Otterburne and Marchand took part.

Shareholders of the Steinbach Curling Club decided at a meeting September 18, 1962 to incorporate their organization into a limited stock company. (It was previously a non-profitable charitable organization). New shareholders and funds were then sought to proceed with plans to build a new four-sheet rink.

Contract to build the new \$25,000 rink was let in early August, 1963. The old rink was dismantled.

Artificial ice was installed at the Steinbach Curling Rink in the fall of 1969.

In baseball:

The Rempel's challenged the Sobering's in 1957

Some 60 years ago, so the story goes, Heinrich Sobering, then proud father of his first-born son, told his friends that he was well on the way to raising his own baseball team. His friend, Peter S. Rempel, councillor in the R.M. of Hanover where Heinrich was policeman, is said to have reported: "I'll raise a better team than you any time."

Unfortunately, Mr. Rempel did not live to see the day when the Rempel's and the Sobering's met on the smart new baseball field but the game between the two families — an event that few towns can equal — was recorded on July 6, 1957, and goes down in history as an unusual family event.

For the Sobering boys it must be said that they possessed a dauntless spirit that doesn't know the meaning of defeat. Their hardball playing according to one of the boys, consisted mostly of pitching the ball against the wall of the barn and catching it on the rebound. But that didn't stop them from taking up the challenge of the Rempels, who had been pitching for Steinbach's regular hardball team for some 20 years.

Organizing this unusual family game took quite a bit of phoning and travelling. Pete Rempel was home on a visit from Kelowna, B.C., which seemed to have started the whole idea; Marvin Rempel was called in from Gladstone, where he was assistant Hydro supervisor; Arnold came from Winnipeg, as did Clarence.

Eddie Sobering, a Singer salesman in Winnipeg, cut short his holidays at Atikokan to attend the game; John Sobering left his geese and his ducks at Zhoda, where he farmed; Ben Sobering doffed his policeman's garb and traded it for the baseball uniform, and other Sobering's came from various parts of the province where they worked. The Sobering's



Resplendent in striped caps and white uniforms these nine Steinbach ball players set out for a game against Greenland in a three-seater buggy. The photograph was taken around 1907, several years before the first of Henry Ford's products began rolling down Steinbach's Main Street. Though individual players on this photo cannot be identified, the Peter Toews boys and John Friesen are expected to be among the nine. .

—photo courtesy Mrs. George Goossen



The Sobering ball team. Back row: John, Frank, Henry, Bill, Ben, and Ed. Front row: Father H. R. Sobering, Jim, Walter and Art.

—Carillon News photo



The Rempel ball team. Back row: Ray, Oscar, Pete, Arnold, Marvi. Front row: Jake, George and Ralph.

—Carillon News photo

had one over the Rempel's: they had a spare in case any of their players were injured.

The game drew a good crowd of interested spectators who watched the Sobering clan slowly lose ground to the Rempel's. At the end of the fourth inning the score stood at 15-4 in favour of the Rempel's and the Sobering's decided to leave it at that.

Sports grounds

The Steinbach Board of Trade (later called Chamber of Commerce) used much of the money raised at the annual Dominion Day celebrations for improved sports facilities.

Even in 1937, despite the strangle-hold of the Depression, the Board of Trade refused to give in to hard times. Using the money raised on July 1, the Board paid for the 62-acre field west of town which it had acquired in spring and even began making some improvements.

Previous to this date there had always been

difficulties encountered whenever a field was needed for a sports day or ball game.

Since 1937 the Chamber of Commerce together with volunteers and different groups have spent thousands of hours and dollars in building up the grounds and facilities.

A great deal of money was spent on the grounds in 1957 and 1958. Wood and steel bleachers were built, ball diamonds were improved, lights were put up on various parts of the grounds and fences built.

Hockey and the first skating rinks

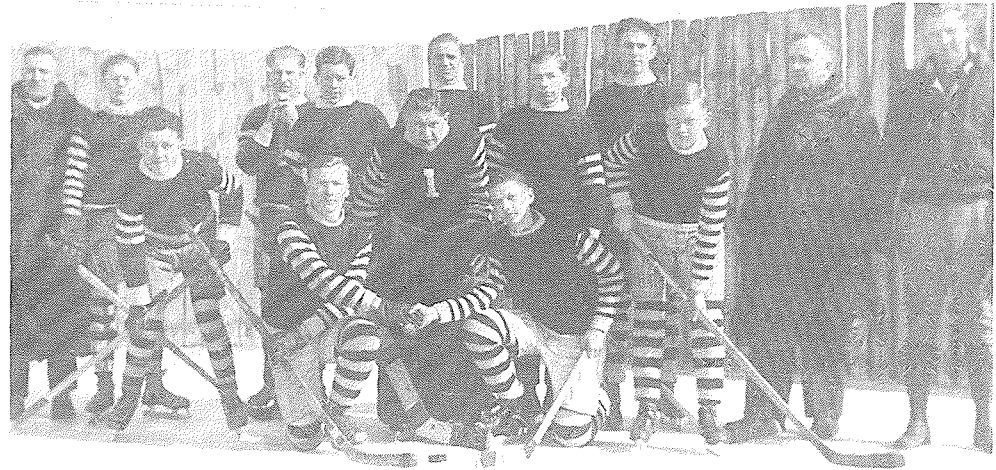
Steinbach's first skating rink was built around 1912-15 at the north end of town where Regier Foods is located today and it was a monument to Henry Sobering's enduring energy and courage to keep on working when nearly everyone else had given up.

The water for that rink was hauled laboriously in a large tank which was used in sum-



Steinbach's senior hockey team in 1930. Back row: Ed. J. Friesen, Nick Friesen, Aaron Kroeker, Aug. Schmidt, Peter Neufeld, John Toews and Peter Q. Friesen. Front row: Jac. Peters, Ernie Weiss (referee), and John Loewen. Most of these fellows were 60 minute men.

—Carillon News photo



A Steinbach Collegiate team in the mid-1930's. Back row: Jacob G. Kornelsen, Bill Friesen, Walter Janz, Albert Goossen, Ronald Campbell, Ron Reimer (goalie), Joe Penner, Ben Loewen, Benno Toews, Julius Toews and August Schmidt. Kneeling in front are Irvin Goossen and Levi Loewen.

—Carillon News photo

mer to supply water for the steam engine during threshing. The boys who built the rink did not have horses to pull the tank so big Henry Sobering took hold of the tongue and the rest shoved, pulled and groaned the thing along Main Street to the rink where it was emptied

and rolled back for another load.

The rink was a simple affair in those days and the biggest enemy was the snowstorm. Every time it snowed the boys had work for several days clearing the ice. A shelter was built at this same location after a year or two



The Steinbach Huskies around 1939. Back row: L. A. Barkman, Alex Tarasenco, Ed Loewen, Albert Toews, Pete Tarasenco and John R. Toews. Front row: Ernie Toews, George Loewen, Johnny Staerk, Levi Barkman and Pete Q. Friesen.

—Carillon News photo

and skaters could then put on their skates inside instead of in a snowdrift or at home.

The second rink location, according to P. S. Guenther who was in on the building of most of the rinks, was in the area around 1st Street and Elm. By this time there were enough skaters to hire a caretaker and at night two strings of electric lights flickered over the skaters. This was around 1918.

The third rink location, around 1921-22, was in the vicinity of Elm and Home Streets and this time it was not on private property. The five-acre lot had been purchased by a group of interested skaters from the H. W. Reimer estate. It was used for baseball in summer and hockey in winter. A six-foot high fence kept some of the snow out and provided a bit of shelter from the cold winds. A fairly large building enabled the skaters to change in comfort.

When this location was given up, around 1927, another rink was built on First Street close to Lumber. Several years later another rink was built where the curling rink stands today. The operation of the skating rink was a struggle right up until the present arena was built in 1967.

Steinbach has had strong hockey teams in Southeast competition right till recent years. In the early days the teams would travel to neighboring communities by sleigh and inter-community rivalry would sometimes become fierce.

In 1931 the Steinbach boys were playing against teams from the Winnipeg firms of John Erzinger Ltd., Scott Bathgate and National Drug Co. In January, 1931 the local team played Piney one day and got clipped 5-3. Scoring for Steinbach were Pete Neufeld, Johnny Toews and Ed Friesen.

That local rink conditions weren't outstanding even for those years, can be seen by the following news item that appeared in a November, 1938 issue of *Die Steinbach Post*: "Pete Tarasenco and Ed Friesen have undertaken to manage the skating rink this winter and have put in a few luxuries such as a wooden floor, bench and a ticket booth. Pete and Ed, contrary to the rest of us, are now eagerly awaiting the cold weather."

Hockey, in those days, was of far greater interest to the people than it is today. Almost entire communities would attend games and some of the bad blood between Steinbach and

Grunthal, for example, is to this day due to some of the rough rivalry in hockey that took place between the two communities in the 1940's and '50's.

Carillon News sports writer Alf Warkentin wrote in the January 19, 1951 issue:

"League games tough"

"It's right to the body, a left to the jaw — Don Dunphey describing the fight last Saturday at Steinbach where the Huskies of Steinbach edged the Grunthal Red Wings 3 to 2 in the roughest game of this season, probably in all of Steinbach hockey history. The fights were packed into the third period, Eldon Toews starting it early in the period in a tangle with an unidentified Grunthal player. From then on the penalty box was packed. As many as five players at one time were in the box. Both sides were playing dirty hockey. The referee definitely should have clamped down on the players sooner than he did.

"Harold Kreutzer's late second period goal proved to be the winning one. Shooting through a maze of players, the puck, which the goalie could not see, clipped the edge of the goal crease. Eve Turrene, the St. Pierre flash, scored the last goal of the game for Grunthal in the third period. Abe Klassen netted the other goal for Grunthal. Assisting Kreutzer in the scoring department for the Huskies were Pete Tarasenco and Henry Enns."

The Carillon League

The hottest hockey league ever organized in this area was probably the Carillon League with the Prefontaine Cup representing the silverware. The league was organized November 28, 1938 at a meeting at St. Pierre.

Steinbach first won the Prefontaine Cup in 1941 then again in 1951, 1952 and 1953 when the Steinbach Huskies probably had the strongest teams ever.

The 1953 season ended on March 20 at the La Broquerie Arena when the Steinbach Huskies played Grunthal in the last game of the three-out-of-five final series.

Named "most valuable player" in 1953 was

Chuck Toews who had become the bulwark of the Huskies defence corps after joining the team at the age of 13. He retired in 1959 after being with the club for 15 years and amassing a tremendous record.

Line-up of the 1953 Huskies team was:

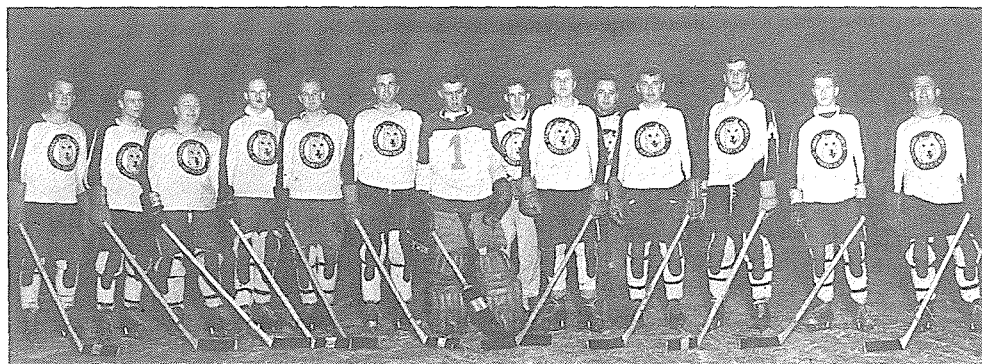
Harold Unger - Manager
 Chuck Toews - Right Defence
 Cornie Hiebert - Right Wing
 Denver Wiebe - Goalie
 Ken Toews - Right Defence
 Lawrence Guenther - Right Defence
 Harold Wiebe - Centre
 Gil Peters - Left Wing
 Peter Guenther - Left Defence
 Ralph Rempel - Left Wing
 Levi Barkman - Centre
 Henry Enns - Right Wing
 Ken Dueck - Defence, Spare Goalie
 Dennis Guenther - Left Wing
 Gordon Barkman - Left Wing

Up until 1955, Steinbach never had more than two hockey teams in competition. Then, in 1956, no less than five organized teams were rapidly whipped into shape for competition for everything from Molloy Cup and Molloy Shield to the provincial Bantam play-offs.

This change was at least partially due to the organization and training of minor hockey teams.

Hockey in Steinbach took a drop in the years after 1960 when many of the older Huskies "greats" hung up their skates. It was the end of an era. Though there were some young players like the Freund brothers, Jim Steel and LaVern Loewen moving up, there were gaps that just weren't being filled and there is no question that the lack of an arena greatly hampered the hockey teams.

The Steinbach Eagles, another senior team, was organized in these years by Pete Guenther, long-time hockey promoter in the community. It took some years to build up this club and many players did not have the advantage of having received minor hockey training but after the formation of the Hanover-Tache Hockey League the Eagles became one of the strongest contenders.



The Steinbach Huskies in the mid-1950's. Left to right: John Barkman, Boyd Diamond, Chuck Toews, Jim Hossack, Gord Kreutzer, Pete Guenther, Denver Wiebe, Ralph Rempel, Helmut Pankratz, Harold Kreutzer, Gil Peters, Dennis Guenther, La Vern Loewen and Harold Wiebe.

—Carillon News photo



T. G. Smith, who prodded a reluctant community into supporting many a sports program, organized minor baseball in Steinbach in 1955. Here he is seen throwing a ball to open the 1967 Little League season.

—Carillon News photo

Minor baseball was organized in 1955

Minor baseball was organized in Steinbach in 1955 by the community's greatest sports promotor, T. G. Smith. It was largely due to "T. G.'s" efforts that the leagues were organized and the boys received uniforms and equipment.

In later years, after Mr. Smith's retirement

in Winnipeg, the work has been carried on by others.

Steinbach Collegiate sports

Sports has nearly always been an important though unofficial subject on the local school curriculum. In the early years, soccer and baseball were the only forms of recreation but in later years hockey and then basketball have stolen the spotlight.

On January 19, 1941, for example, the collegiate team drove to Grunthal to tangle with that community's school team. The SCI won this game but a return match the next week



The Steinbach Collegiate's Davidson Trophy winners in January, 1959. This was a proud first for the collegiate in that it was the first time a Steinbach team had won such honors in the annual high school event. The team was comprised of, left to right, LaVern Loewen, lead, Larry Tarasenco, third, Alvin Steingart, second and Peter Vogt, skip.

saw Grunthal take revenge and edge out the SCI team.

In later years the SCI's large enrollment enabled it to stay on top in nearly all sports endeavors in the school division.

A school curling team brought high honors to the SCI in 1959 when it took home the coveted Davidson Trophy, won in provincial competition. The team was comprised of Peter Vogt, Alvin Steingart, LaVern Loewen and Larry Tarasenco.

The first organized basketball game ever to be played in Steinbach took place in March, 1962 in the collegiate's new gymnasium. The Winnipeg Senior Men's Basketball League put on an exhibition game for the general encouragement of would-be basketballers.

Volleyball is a game that has become popular in the last 10 years. Not only has the high school team, the SCI Sabres, won the Zone 13 title a number of times but a group of teachers have also done well in provincial competition.

Baseball was the most popular school sport during many years but gym sports have now pushed this sport into the background.

Golf

The story of the Steinbach golf course goes back to 1954. As the town grew and took on a more urban pace of living, a few local people took up golfing as a hobby. Among them were Edwin Regehr, Ernie Barlow, Ernie Neufeld, Edmar Rempel and Jake Wiebe. There were no facilities for golfing here at this time and they decided to form a golf club and start working toward a local course. After marking off the measurements for a course on the local sports ground, they decided to call a public meeting. Before the year was over these enthusiasts had more support than they had ever banked on and signed up 26 members to the new Steinbach Golf Club.

During the club's short history, the members faced numerous obstacles — things like clearing brush, cutting grass and making greens — but by 1960, after six years, their efforts had borne fruit. Hundreds of trees had been planted, brush had been cut and some drainage work done. In the 1960 sea-



Though a few Steinbach residents, notably "Steinbach Post" publisher A. B. Dyck, golfed in a cow pasture where the present Texaco bulk tanks stand 'way back around 1934, the sport didn't really catch on here until a few years later, in the mid-1950's. This photo, taken around 1955, shows Edwin Regehr putting into an empty oil can behind Regehr's Garage. The man at left is unidentified.

—Carillon News photo

son, 4,000 games were played on the golf course.

Golfing increased in popularity over the next eight or nine years and then the imagination of some of the executive was fired up with a plan for a far bigger and better course that would attract golfers from all over the province.

Some of the golfers were also flyers and so they planned to build both a golf course and an airport at one time.

After several meetings the decision was made to go ahead with the big project. Plans called for a modern nine-hole golf course and air park on an attractive piece of land one mile north of Steinbach.

Shares went on sale in 1967 and work on the 122-acre course began late the same year. One of the best golf course architects was consulted and the project progressed rapidly.

Official opening of the golf course-airpark took place in October, 1969. Since then it has

been recognized as one of the finest in the province, attracting thousands of golfers from various communities.



Premier Ed Schreyer, left, cut the ribbon to officially open the Steinbach Fly-in Golf Course on July 3, 1971. It is considered to be one of the finest nine-hole golf courses in Manitoba. At right, assisting Premier Schreyer, is president of the Steinbach Golf Club, A. D. Penner.

—Carillon News photo

Early football and the Dutchmen

Both baseball and football (soccer) were popular sports in Steinbach around 1905 and the fairgrounds were used in those days by the sons of the town's pioneers.

Players on two early soccer teams were the following. Team one: Isaac W. Reimer, Bernhard W. Reimer, Klaas R. Toews, John R. Toews, C. F. Friesen, J. R. Friesen, Gerhard F. Giesbrecht, Jacob F. Giesbrecht, John F. Barkman and Jacob F. Barkman. Team two: C. T. Loewen, C. T. Kroeker, Klass W. Brandt, Gerh W. Brandt, Jacob J. Barkman, John W. Toews, Henry F. Toews and Adolf Freund.

Football in this area began in the summer of 1955 when 20-year-old Wilmer Penner of Landmark wrote a letter of inquiry to the management of the Winnipeg Rods of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Junior Football League. He was favored with an invitation to try out with the club and after being accepted, played with the Rods until he had to return to school in fall. Armed with the experience he gained with this team Mr. Penner returned to Landmark and rounding up all the Penner's and Plett's in the area, fielded a smart team that began rolling over any and all opposition they could find.

After trouncing anything Steinbach, Niver-

ville, or Grunthal could muster, the Landmark boys went looking elsewhere and proceeded to lick a number of big-name teams in Winnipeg.

Though the team could do well in isolated single games, the boys knew league play would require more staying power and a lot more manpower and support than one tiny community could provide. As a result, they looked to Steinbach. They found a few men with organizational abilities there, men who would give time to a task that for the most part was thankless, men like Dave Epp and Jake Rempel and Wilmer Penner, and practice sessions began in the summer of 1960 under the guidance of Mr. Penner. At the start, many of the players were ignorant of even the basics of the game but coach Penner, in spite of his monumental task, had an ace in the hole: his players had that something called desire.

In their first game the Steinbach-Landmark Dutchmen, as they were now called, surprised the West Kildonan Mustangs and won 18-0. They went on and won the next two games and were tied for first spot in the Manitoba Senior (then Intermediate) Football League.

This was a fantastic development. The experts were unconvinced that this team could become a dominating force their first year in the league. They thought that the Dutchmen were a flash in the pan outfit, a bunch of hepped-up guys playing above their heads.

And it turned out they were right. The flying Dutchmen met the league-leading St. Vital Bulldogs one day and were shot down 69-1. Cloud nine had come to earth. Injuries reduced



Wilmer Penner, centre, of Landmark who introduced football to the area in 1955. Dave Epp, left and Jake Rempel were key men in helping organize the Steinbach-Landmark Dutchmen Football Club.

—Carillon News photo

the already-thin ranks of the team; players didn't show up for practices and then didn't come to games. The Steinbach-Landmark Dutchmen failed to win another game in 1960.

1961 was a lean year; the team was colorless although it managed a couple of wins. There was a brief flicker of hope in 1962. The Dutchmen made the play-offs but then sputtered and died.

In 1964, they did not win a game. At times, nearly every member was playing two ways because of a severe player shortage. They were susceptible to injury because they were

not in condition and their equipment was not adequate.

In 1964 the club announced that it would drop out of the senior league because of the lack of a presentable playing field, no qualified coach, the necessity of playing on Sunday, and expenses incurred by travel.

Steinbach, it turned out, wasn't ready for football in 1960 or even 1964. The Dutchmen never were revived and it is doubtful whether football will ever be an important sport in the area.



The Kinsmen Pool at Steinbach, a memorial to the efforts of members of one of Steinbach's most active community organizations.

—Carillon News photo

8. The lumber industry

Though the first Mennonite settlers were mostly not adept lumbermen, having used brick for much of the construction of buildings on the Russian steppes, the new country forced them to turn to the woods for material for shelter and an income.

A contract from the German Consul in Winnipeg to cut a large order of lumber in 1876, brought badly-needed cash and hope into the tiny struggling village of Steinbach. The contract called for bringing 825 logs 12 inches in diameter or thicker and 20 to 30 feet long to Steinbach from a cutting area 12 miles east and two miles south of Steinbach. The job was done and \$700 was divided among the workers.

As the settlers had no sawmills the first winter, they improvised by using a homemade hand saw-rig six feet high. The logs that were to be sawn were then rolled onto this structure and two men, with the usual six-foot saw, could average about one hundred feet of lumber a day.

The first sawmill was built by Abram S. Friesen of Steinbach in 1876. The driving power was furnished by two horses.

Boards like siding and flooring were purchased in Winnipeg by the early settlers but the frame logs were smoothed with a broad axe which had a 10-inch cutting edge.

The first cedar shingles were cut by hand by the early English settlers in the district. The Mennonite farmers bought many shingles from old Tom Rankin who was an expert cutter while his wife, in true pioneer fashion, helped by sorting and making them up in bundles.

In 1877 the windmill being built by A. S. Friesen was completed to the stage where wind power could be used to cut logs. The next year Mr. Friesen installed a steam engine in the windmill. This guaran-

teed enough power for continuous sawing or milling.

Several other portable sawmills were in operation by 1880 and these moved from camp to camp. Sometimes they would be operated day and night. By late 1891, a large mill capable of sawing 8,000 feet per day was in operation at Steinbach.

In the first years after 1874 most local lumber was taken from the bush east of Steinbach and from the northwest quarter of N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 34-6-6E, familiarly known to generations of Steinbachers as the "Bush Reimer Farm".

These well-timbered 40 acres of bush-land supplied tamarac lumber to residents of Steinbach in varying quantities for over 70 years.

During this period, former owner of the property John C. Reimer has estimated that the timber lot yielded well in excess of 100,000 board feet of tamarac and spruce and several carloads of spruce pulp. Some of the logs measured over 12 inches in diameter. One tree was an 8 inch by 8 inches, twenty feet long, which yielded a total of 165 feet of lumber.

The last timber was not removed from this bush until 1964.

Life in the bush camps by K. J. B. Reimer

For many years it was customary for men to go into the woods for the winter months to cut their own logs and have them sawn into lumber.

The late local historian K. J. B. Reimer wrote the following account of these trips to the woods many years after they were no longer customary:



A common sight in Steinbach up to the 1950's. Farmers would supplement their income by hauling cordwood to town. These sleighs each carry about one cord of poplar and this would be sold to private home owners or businesses. There would often be a little bickering about the price. If a farmer hadn't sold his load by nightfall it usually became quite a bit cheaper. Steinbach Flour Mills bought by far the most cordwood of any business in Steinbach and farmers frequently took flour in trade.

There would usually be one or two men in the community who would do custom sawing in the winter. In the early days they used the buck saw but with the invention of the Swede saw, they used that instead. In later years they had saw rigs with stationary engines and then, later, even tractors. In the 1930's a load like this would sell for anywhere between \$1 and \$2.50. This picture was taken around 1945 in front of Derksen Printers, just before the practise of selling cordwood in town diminished because of the increased use of coal as fuel.

—Carillon News photo

Our settlement derived great benefit from being located close to the woods east of Steinbach. Here the village residents spent a lot of time in winter making their own lumber.

It was the writer's privilege that he could still have part in this winter work before it vanished from these parts of the country.

As these trips to the sawmill often involved from one to two or more weeks' absence from home, feed had to be prepared and loaded on the sleigh before leaving.

Usually early on a Monday morning the hard-packed winter road was dotted with teams all going in one direction straight east on the townline, passing the village of La Broquerie on the north side over a bridge on the Seine River.

A few miles east of here, we passed the first green spruce woods. We were told that this sprucewood, in the early days, was owned

by the Steinbach village and it was here that all the big timber for the flour mill was cut and brought to Steinbach to be sawed into lumber. From here, also, came the first lumber for the early dwellings.

Around this area somewhere was the noon stopping place where the writer has counted as many as 50 teams at one time, coming and going. It was a common sight to see a fleetling deer or even the odd moose crossing the road ahead. Timber wolves and lynx were also not uncommon.

On still frosty days, the shrill sound of the powerful sawblade biting into the frozen logs could be heard for a long distance before we came to the scene of activity. Once that sound was heard, or side roads into the big timber became more frequent, indicating the nearness of habitation in this strange wilderness, even the tired horses stepped livelier, their instinct telling them that after the long

trip a well-filled manger was awaiting them.

On arrival the traveller would notice several temporary huts of rough lumber with the inevitable stovepipe sticking through the flat roof. Through the one or two small windows he saw a smoking lantern. The main thoroughfare passing these huts was sometimes not easy to follow after darkness had fallen on the weary traveller.

The first act for a newcomer was to inquire for the "farmers" camp. This was in most instances made of logs, being put up as the first building by the owner of the sawmill before sawing operations were started and afterwards given over to people that stayed a few nights or until their own camp was put up.

These farmer camps sometimes were in a bad state of repair, nobody taking the trouble to fill holes in the roof or sidewalls, though plenty of firewood was always available free of charge. I remember seeing the stars through the roof at 30 below. We kept all our clothes on plus the fur coat and cap for extra protection.

Most of these sawmills had many patrons and did a thriving business all through the winter. Often the mills had to start sawing day and night by February to finish all the logs so as to clear out of the swamp before the breakup in the spring.

This night operation was of particular interest to the younger people. As the slabs had no commercial value at that time, they were all thrown into a fire that was kept going all winter, illuminating the dark nights around it. Then the weird call of the grey bush owl could be heard far away from some tree.

Another never to be forgotten picture is that of late loggers with big loads coming into the light, their steaming horses white with frost.

To my knowledge there was only one fatal accident involving the sawmills that operated for so many years around our community. A falling tree critically injured George Fast. He was brought home alive but died a few weeks later. He was the father of J. W. Fast the present Justice of Peace.

New timber areas sought in 1891-92

By around 1891 or '92, the supply of timber to the immediate east of the reserve was being exhausted and new cutting areas were being sought.

Playing a key role in establishing the site of the next major timber cutting area was Abram W. Reimer, son of Klaas Reimer. He became the son-in-law of Peter Barkman and joined as partner in operation of the first steam flour mill. After the mill burned down he left the partnership and went into the lumber business, blazing the trail to Pinehill in 1892 some 25 miles southeast of Steinbach in what later became known as the Bedford district. This remained the major Mennonite timber source for many winters.

In 1894 C. B. Loewen, father to C. T. Loewen, became a partner with Mr. Reimer. A few winters later, the sawmill was set up in Steinbach and a lumberyard business started at the present site of Steinbach Lumber Yards.

C. T. Loewen and Sons Ltd.

The firm of C. T. Loewen & Sons Ltd. had its beginning in 1905 when C. T. Loewen, then an enterprising young man of 22, left the family farm with his father's sawmill to go into the lumber business full time. For some years Mr. Loewen carried on the business from his home without the benefit of a downtown office.

The need for a Main Street office became apparent as business increased however, and in 1910 Mr. Loewen struck up a partnership with John R. Toews who was at that time running an implement agency and shop. This was a good arrangement because it left Mr. Loewen free to operate his lumber camps with a reliable salesman at home.

Until this time the business had been 100 per cent lumber but with the opening of a permanent office a line of builders' hardware, doors, windows, cement and other building materials were added.

Then came the first World War and business took a big swing upwards. Money became more plentiful and everybody with means was building a large, square, two-storey home. But this wasn't for Mr. Toews. True to the traditions of



This is C. T. Loewen's sawmill at the site of the present retail store on Main Street around 1925. Note the oxen at extreme right which were being used to haul away the sawn lumber.

—photo courtesy Ed Loewen

his forefathers, he thought the farm was a better place to raise his growing family and he sold his shares in the business to Mr. Loewen.

The business kept on growing and a sideline that proved very profitable and rugged enough to suit the temperament of Mr. Loewen was moving of houses. Later this business was taken over by his brother, J. T. Loewen, whose fame as house-mover became almost legendary.

The war ended then and the year following proved to be very profitable for the small firm. As many as 12 carloads of lumber, all marked 'C. T. Loewen, Steinbach,' sometimes sat on the track at Giroux at the same time and business really boomed.

The first millwork equipment was purchased and a three-sided planer and a combination wood-worker were installed. It was at about this time too, that a young man named Frank Friesen applied for and landed a job as yard man and mill-worker. At this time however, very little millwork was done outside of a few storm windows and screens and then more as a convenience to customers than a specialized department of the firm.

Boom times of 1919 soon dissipated and because of the rapid decline of business, Mr. Friesen decided to leave. In 1923 he found employment with a large furniture factory in Chicago. The experience he gained there was

to prove invaluable in later years when he returned to manage the factory in Steinbach.

Another young man who joined the firm in the early twenties was Jonas Friesen, who became general manager of the firm and then later took over Steinbach Lumber.

"Business was so slow in those days," Mr. Friesen said, "that we thought we did good if we sold 10 pounds of nails in a day."

Then came the bee supplies business. Frank Friesen came back to Loewen's in 1932 and again went back to his old job. At about this time also, there was a renewed interest in the ancient art of producing honey and Loewen's took on a bee supply line for an eastern firm. One day Adolph Freund, one of the major honey producers in the district, asked Frank why he didn't make the supplies himself. Frank thought he could, but nobody else did. Using odds and ends of lumber around the yard and working in the evenings, he turned out the first bee supplies made here. Freund was 100 per cent satisfied so the firm soon began manufacturing for others. An old storage shed was insulated and this was the first real factory.

By 1936 the bee supplies business had become big, at least for those times, and the first catalogue was published and mailed out to apiarists. Steinbach Sheet Metal built most

of the metal items; others were purchased from outside firms. Bees were brought in from Alabama by truck and orders for supplies flowed in from all over Canada.

During the war years the C. T. Loewen firm also operated lumber camps in the winter months in various parts of the province and even at one time in British Columbia. As a part of their training, sons Edward and George took their turn at running a camp. Mr. Loewen believed that this was necessary experience for anyone that was going to follow in his steps.

In 1946 a larger factory was built for the protection of bee-keepers supplies but a sharp decline in the bee-keeping industry a year later made it imperative to scan the horizon for alternate business.

The Manitoba government's rural electrification program was now underway. Needed for this project would be many hydro-pole

crossarms and it was the good fortune of the company to obtain a large order for these.

A slide in their manufacturing endeavors was averted when the firm began the production of windows in 1948. The following year Loewen's began selling their product to the wholesale building trade in Manitoba. Following this, the owners of the company looked to the West for an expanded market and found it.

The business was sold by Mr. Loewen to his three sons, Edward, George and Cornie, in July, 1951.

In the fall of 1959 construction began on a new plant and the millwork department moved into this building in June 1960. With an eye to the future, the new factory was constructed in such a way that enlargements could easily be made. These expansions were made in 1962 and 1964, giving the factory a total area of over 100,000 square feet.



Inside C. T. Loewen's woodwork factory in 1965.

—Carillon News photo

Steinbach Lumber Yards

Steinbach Lumber Yards was originally purchased by M. M. Penner in 1918 from a firm then known as Reimer, Barkman and Friesen. At that time it consisted of a lumber yard and implement business. Mr. Penner had been operating a small sash and door business at the other end of town prior to this purchase and this was then incorporated.

Mr. Penner began making his own lumber in 1924. This firm went into the bush behind Marchand about 20 miles southeast of Steinbach and in that first year brought out about 250,000 board feet. Every year they had to move further into the bush as the timber stands depleted. By 1935 the teamsters had to haul the lumber 45 miles. At the peak they had brought out about 600,000 board feet in a season.

For a number of years they had no men or equipment in the bush at all, but then, in the 1940's they leased an 18-square-mile tract of timber on the Red Lake Road in Ontario and worked full tilt with a crew of 37 men. On this lease, which was government cruised, there was an estimated 26 million feet of lumber and an-

other 45,000 cord of pulp. In 1947 alone they brought out from two to three million feet.

A fire in 1945 destroyed the firm but Mr. Penner's sons bought him out and retained the business name of Steinbach Lumber Yards.

In December, 1949, Steinbach Lumber Yards changed hands. The Penner brothers had started a large lumber enterprise at Quibel, Ontario in the meantime and because the business was doing very well and the owners felt they could not afford to divide their attention between the two concerns, they decided to sell Steinbach Lumber Yards.

It was probably the biggest cash deal in the community to that date. Buyer was Jonas F Friesen who had managed the highly successful C. T. Loewen and Sons firm for the previous 25 years.

The deal involved the purchase of all buildings and stock of Steinbach Lumber Yards but did not include the machinery of the sash and door factory which was moved to Dryden, Ontario where the Penner brothers planned to set up a new factory closer to the source of supply.

Official changeover date was Jan. 1, 1950.



Agriculture

Early agriculture

By 1874, time of the first migration, the Mennonite settlements in the Ukraine were probably the most progressive farming districts in all Russia. The settlements were concentrating mostly on grain farming at this time, with livestock being of secondary importance. Previous to this, before a market for grain developed, the Mennonites had been noted sheep raisers.

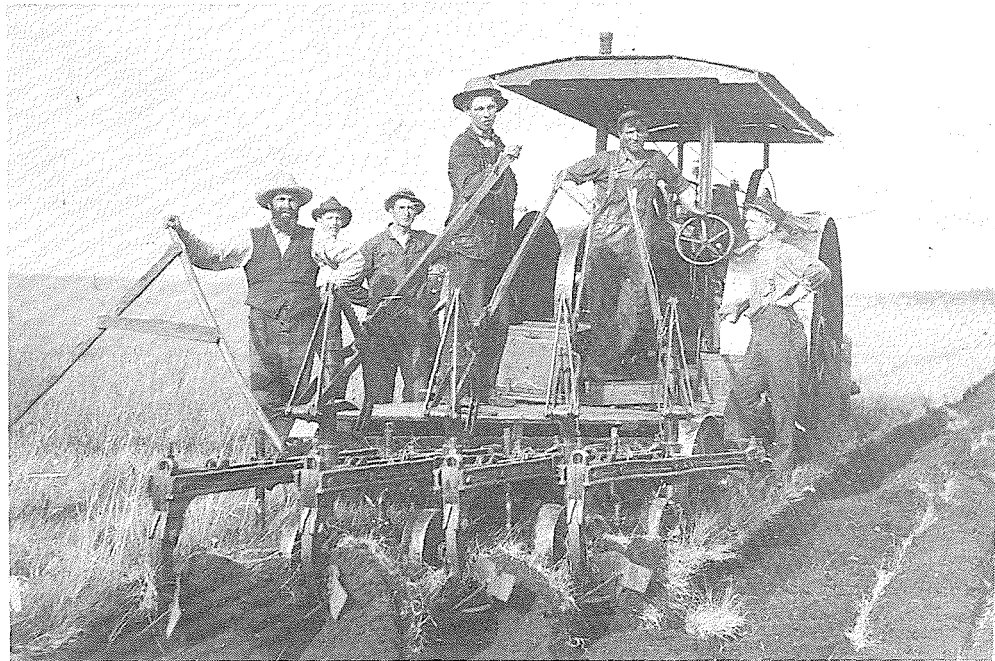
Paradoxically, their success in Russia hindered progressive agriculture in the East Reserve. Because the Mennonites had been so successful in Russia they were hesitant in giving up old methods that had worked in that country but were not readily adaptable to Canada. The village system is the most obvious example. While important for morale in the first years, the land did not really lend itself too well to this system in most areas. Homesteads were better than the village farms because they were

more compact. The village system began breaking up in Blumenort in 1904 and broke up in Steinbach in 1910. In the extreme south of the Reserve, however, this system was used until the 1920's.

In the first years there was no agricultural advice available to the settlers. They were the first large agricultural group to settle in the newly-formed province of Manitoba and unlike the French settlers, moved into an area away from the rivers and streams.

As described in a previous page, the area of the East Reserve was not ideal farmland. Once covered entirely by Lake Agassiz, the Reserve was located in an area where the grassland changes to woodland.

The terrain varied considerably from township to township. Mostly covered with trees such as scrub poplar and willow, there were some patches of good soil among the bogs and stoney areas. These areas, however, were largely confined to the more open sections in the northern part of the Reserve. The land is



Plowing in the Greenland area around 1909 with one of the first International gas tractors in the area. Left to right are Peter B. Toews, his sons Jacob and Cornelius, Henry P. Toews and Abram G. Toews, owner of the four-share plow outfit. At right, leaning against the wheel cover is John Toews, another son of Peter B. Toews.

—photo courtesy Peter T. Wier



The Friesen Machine Shop, founded in 1892 by A. S. Friesen and sons. This was where the big Case and Able steam engines were repaired and all manner of mechanical implements were invented or improved upon. Mr. Friesen introduced various new types of agricultural implements to this area and is believed to have brought a Watrous steamer

to Steinbach from the U.S. in 1890. The Machine Shop had two main departments. Iron work was done in the left side of the building and woodwork in the right. Note the old steam engine with vertical boiler at right.

—photo courtesy the Friesen family

slightly lower in the south and forest growth thicker. Drainage has consequently always been a great problem.

* * * * *

Many Mennonite settlers of 1874 arrived with little more than a few personal possessions and the clothes on their backs. Implements, tools and oxen were purchased in Moorehead or Winnipeg. Some livestock is said to have been purchased at Moorehead and driven overland to the Reserve. The first settlers in Steinbach were so poor that only 15 of them were able to buy a yoke of oxen each. As the hay which they made up for the animals in October was already frozen, some of the oxen died from cold or starvation the very first winter.

The settlers had arrived too late in 1874 to begin any field work and so the virgin soil was first broken in the spring of 1875.

At Kleefeld, according to one pioneer, this was done with two pairs of oxen and a 12-inch plow. When it was hot or the mosquitoes were bad, it required a lot of patience to keep going. Six acres was about as much as any of the farmers succeeded in plowing that first year. Planted were potatoes and oats.

Some of the seed had been brought with the

first settlers from Russia but most had to be purchased with borrowed money. Sowing was done by hand and in place of a harrow the settlers fashioned a frame with pointed roots. It would take innumerable times to go over the sods with this primitive implement before the sods would be pulverized enough to begin sowing. Harrowing was doubly difficult because most settlers plowed too deep, turning up sods that were too thick for the spring sun to rot.

Disaster struck the settlement early. Grasshoppers completely destroyed the crop of 1875 and the first successful crop in the East Reserve was first harvested in 1876, though it was somewhat damaged by frost.

Three thousand acres of land were broken in 1875. This was backset and seeded to wheat in 1876. By the end of 1876, 5,000 acres had been broken and by the end of 1877, 7,200 acres.

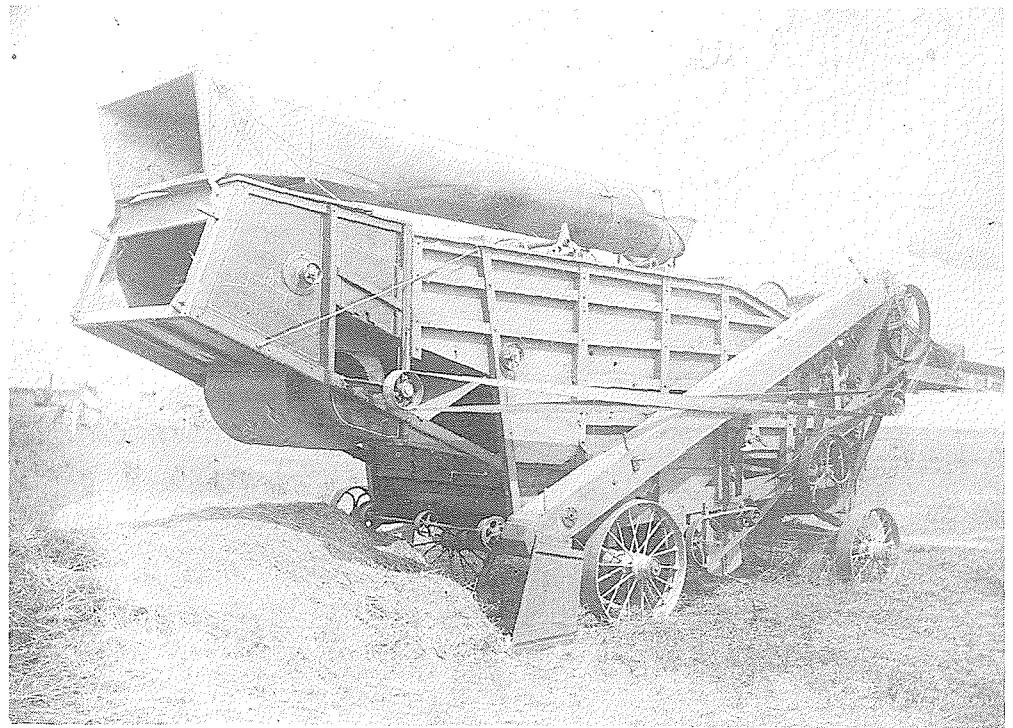
By 1878 the Reserve was growing enough grain to be self-sufficient. Besides wheat, other important crops in the early years were oats, barley and potatoes.

The going became too difficult for many. After the grasshopper plague the first crop year, there were a series of wet years starting in 1876 and much of the land in the southern part of the reserve looked like a lake. There was no drainage to speak of and it became ap-



Geo W. Friesen with three oxen and a shoe drill, seeding in the Greenland area around 1911. These oxen already have harnesses; in earlier days yokes were used. In years just previous, of course, seed was just scattered by hand.

—photo courtesy D. F. Penner



The early separators were built without straw blowers and several men were required during threshing to carry the straw away after it came out of the machine. Friesen Machine Shop began building straw blowers such as the one attached onto the rear of this separator, in 1899. They modelled them after one they'd purchased in the U.S. They built two blowers that first year, selling one to Winkler and the other to Morris. Friesen Machine Shop built a total of 46 blowers in the following years until the separators started coming out equipped with straw blowers around 1914. The blowers blew the straw into a neat stack and did the work of two men.

—photo courtesy the Friesen family

parent that the general area was too poor for successful wheat farming. As a result, these settlers had little choice but to move out. By 1880 about 300 of the 700 families in the Reserve moved to the Altona-Gretna area in the West Reserve which had been granted to the Mennonites in 1875.

Those that stayed, together with those that emigrated to Canada later, found the going rough but gradually moved ahead. Some crops, despite all the wetness, yielded good returns and this greatly encouraged the settlers. The Russian seed grain did very well the first few years but it was two weeks later in ripening and had to be exchanged for Red Fyfe after frost hit many crops one year, early in the life of the settlement.

Hay, too, was a very heavy crop. A man could cut three loads a day with a scythe, but it was difficult to cure and haul.

Both hay and grain was cut by hand with a scythe in the first years. Mowers made their appearance in 1875 and reapers in 1878. In Kleefeld, records of one pioneer show that the single reaper there did custom work for one bushel grain per acre cut. This machine put the open sheaves in small piles far enough out of the way to allow room for the next round. Two years later the machine was improved and a platform added so that two men could stand and bind the sheaves before throwing them down.

In Steinbach the first combination reaper and mower made its appearance in 1880. The reaper was run day and night through the



Diedrich Ginter of Rosengard still used the hand plow occasionally in the 1950's. This method was common in the area around the turn of the century. The hand plow was the forerunner of the plow with wheels.

—Carillon News photo

first season so that the whole settlement could be served. Butter was so cheap at the time (5 cents a pound) that the machine was kept greased with it. Grain was also cheap. Wheat was 35 cents, oats 15 cents and barley 25 cents per bushel. At first eggs had been 40 cents per dozen but they dropped in a year or two to 8 cents and at that price were sent to Winnipeg by ox team.

Though the Mennonites were not used to working with oxen — they had raised fine horses in Russia — first attempts to use horses in the East Reserve failed. Not only were oxen preferable because they were stronger, but they were much cheaper. They also could withstand the cold better and were able to forage for themselves.

They were stubborn, however, and very slow and unexciting and as soon as settlers had greater acreage under cultivation and could afford it, they switched to horses.

Horses, or rather cayuses (Indian ponies) began to be used after 1880 though oxen were still kept for many years after that.

Community pastures

From its earliest days the community of Steinbach had a community pasture. A herdsman was hired who looked after the settler's cows during the day and brought them home at night.

Some years following settlement a section of pasture on the south side of the village was fenced in and the herdsman's duties were lessened to take the cattle to the pasture in the morning and bring them home in the evening.

Usually at 7 o'clock in the morning the herder proceeded slowly along Main Street, blowing a trumpet, which was a signal for all to chase their cows out to Main Street. If someone had slept in and hadn't milked the cow when the trumpet sounded, he was obliged to take it to the pasture himself, or keep it tethered at home for the day. In the evening the trumpet call was the signal to get cows away from Main Street as quickly as possible.

The use of the horn had its origin over three hundred years ago in the Vistula Delta in Prussia. This European custom was upheld in

Steinbach for many decades. Two of the horns used in Steinbach may still be seen at the Mennonite Village Museum.

Mixed farming

Though great progress was being made under arduous conditions, life for the Mennonites in the East Reserve was difficult right to 1900.

One of the main reasons was that there was no one single commodity or crop that could be ideally produced throughout the Reserve. Full scale wheat farming, for example, such as was successfully carried out in the West Reserve, was impossible in nearly all of the East Reserve due to land quality and distance from market.

As a result, mixed farming came into being early in the life of the settlement. Cattle, for milk and slaughter, were kept by every farmer. Many also had poultry and hogs and some even had sheep.

The meager farm income was supplemented in the winter with work in the lumber camps. Garden produce was peddled in Winnipeg and also sold at the city market place.

The cheese factories played a big role

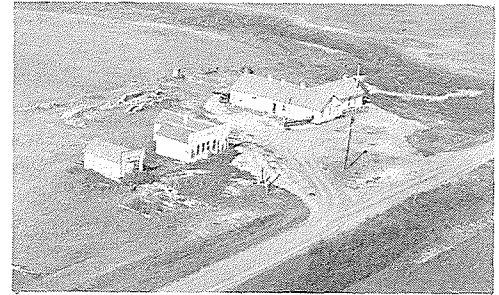
Though all the afore-mentioned diversifications were important for sustaining new settlements, it was the cheese factories that played the greatest role in providing the farmers with an agricultural staple.

The first cheese factory in the East Reserve was built in Steinbach in 1889 by Klaas W. Reimer who also built two more, one at Gruenfeld (Kleefeld) in 1890 and the other at Blumenort in 1892.

Mr. Reimer won a first prize for cheese at the Toronto Exhibition in 1897.

The firm of Braun and Krahn built a cheese factory in Grunthal in 1893 or 1894. The factory was near the firm's store and sawmill.

After the first factory at Steinbach in 1889,



The Hanover Co-op Dairy Society cheese factory at Ebenfeld. It was situated on Sec. 9-7-6 northwest of Steinbach, one mile north of the Mitchell School. It was in operation from 1936-1946. Many cheese factories had a co-op store alongside.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel

there were five more built in the next eight years. Aside from those already mentioned, they included those at Hochstadt (1892) and Hochfeld (1896).

Several other communities also had cheese factories in the period from 1889-1914. These factories were the first successfully organized co-operatives and by 1890 some farmers were receiving a fair amount of money by selling their milk there.

Around 1912, Ontario farmers began greatly increasing milk production because that province was better able to market the cheese and consequently milk prices in Manitoba fell. By 1913 there were only four cheese factories in production in the Reserve and by 1920 there was only one. The cheese factories had flourished for 20 years but from 1922 to 1932 there were none at all in the East Reserve.

Despite the loss of the cheese factories at this time, milk production was not stopped and by 1920 the Reserve's close proximity to Winnipeg provided a new market for milk.

More milk was required at that time by city dairies and to supply the need, skimming and milk receiving stations were set up at various rural points.

Blumenort had a skimming station where milk was separated as early as 1914. Other communities had to bring their milk to any of a half-dozen nearby railway points such as St. Pierre, Giroux and La Broquerie.

When trucking became more common, by around 1930, some communities transported milk directly to Winnipeg. Steinbach had a receiving station by 1934 but this became a creamery in 1934.

The cheese factories began reappearing in 1932 when the depression forced farmers to fall back on any resources available.

Landmark and Blumenort were the first communities to reopen their factories in 1932. More and more opened up throughout the 1930's. In the early 1940's there were 12 within the Reserve. Some of them, such as the one at Kleefeld, were even built new.

In June, 1937, the Kleefeld factory, as an example, was on a 24 hour shift with some 24,000 lbs. passing over the weighing machine in that time period.

By November, 1941, there were six cheese factories in the RM of Hanover and these were able to dispose of all the milk they received.

Cheese factories in the RM of Hanover consistently won top awards in the Manitoba Cheesemakers Competitions in the 1950's. Kraft Foods Ltd. at Grunthal was named the best cheese factory in the province on several occasions and prize-winning cheesemakers from the Kleefeld, Blumenort, New Bothwell and Hanover cheese factories included: C. P. Unger (Blumenort); P. Kehler (Bothwell); P. R. Peters (Hanover Co-op); J. K. Dueck (Kleefeld) and A. Hiebert (Niverville).

Besides Grunthal, the only factory that produced cheese after 1958 was the New Bothwell plant which was established in 1936. The high quality of this cheese finds a ready market to this day.

The Grunthal factories

The cheese and milk plants of Grunthal deserve special mention, (see also Grunthal chapter) especially those in operation in the years following World War II.

Kraft Foods began construction of an ultra-modern plant at Grunthal in 1946 and opened it on January 7, 1948. One of the most modern plants in Canada, the cheese it produced was distributed as straight cheddar and used as a base for other well known Kraft cheese products.

Less than a decade after Kraft Foods opened in the community, the owners decided the plant did not fit in with their tightly organized and highly centralized eastern business. As a result, Kraft Foods was sold November 16, 1956 to Medo-Land Dairy Products of Winnipeg.

Medo-Land, a subsidiary of Modern Dairies, immediately began work on building a spray powder milk plant. This plant, the only one of its kind in Canada at the time, processed raw milk into powder and when it went into operation in the spring of 1958, it opened up a whole new phase in dairying in southeastern Manitoba. Until then, dairy farmers had been divided into two classes — those that shipped milk under contract for the city fluid market and those that shipped cream and fed the skim milk to their livestock. In areas with a cheese factory, there was a third alternative — to ship cheese milk. Now both of those last classes were able to ship milk for powder without entering into a binding contract, at a flat rate of \$2.90 per 100 lbs. By diverting their surplus milk to the Grunthal plant, holders of fluid milk were able to earn over 30 cents more per 100 lbs.

In 1969, Medo-Land received 36 million lbs. of milk for processing from some 200 farmers who were as far away as St. Labre in the east and Emerson in the south. Milk can delivery was stopped in June, 1969 and the familiar ringing and clanking of the cans early every morning was replaced by the clean, quiet and efficient bulk tank trucks.

Farmers shipping milk to Medo-Land operate under the federal government's quota scheme for subsidy payments. The fact that these quotas are geared to the big eastern producers has hampered the dairy industry in southeastern Manitoba and resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of milk producers in the province.

Despite this, Medo-Land has expanded and grown. Aside from the immense quantity of milk received, a large area of the plant is reserved for cheese and butter production. Total cheese production in 1969 was around 1/2 million pounds.

Aside from the obvious benefit of having a large local industry, the powder milk plant has also boosted the entire area by encouraging various municipalities to improve vital roads over which the milk trucks have to travel



With the coming of the combine in the 1950's and 1960's this became a rare sight. This picture was taken in 1958 near Steinbach; the man setting up the stooks is believed to be Jake Klassen. After the binder tied the sheaves they were dumped by fours on the field, then were set up in stooks of five to seven sheaves to dry. Depending on the weather, this could take one to two weeks.

Threshing

Because the East Reserve consists largely of marginal land and because the Mennonites were not growing grain for a competitive market, yields were very low at first. Though figures for the first years are not available, the average wheat yield in the Reserve in 1886 was 12.5 bushels per acre. The provincial average at that time was 15.3.

In the early years, grain was cut with scythes and flails were used for threshing. The threshing block, such as can be seen at the Mennonite Museum at Steinbach, was also used for a short time.

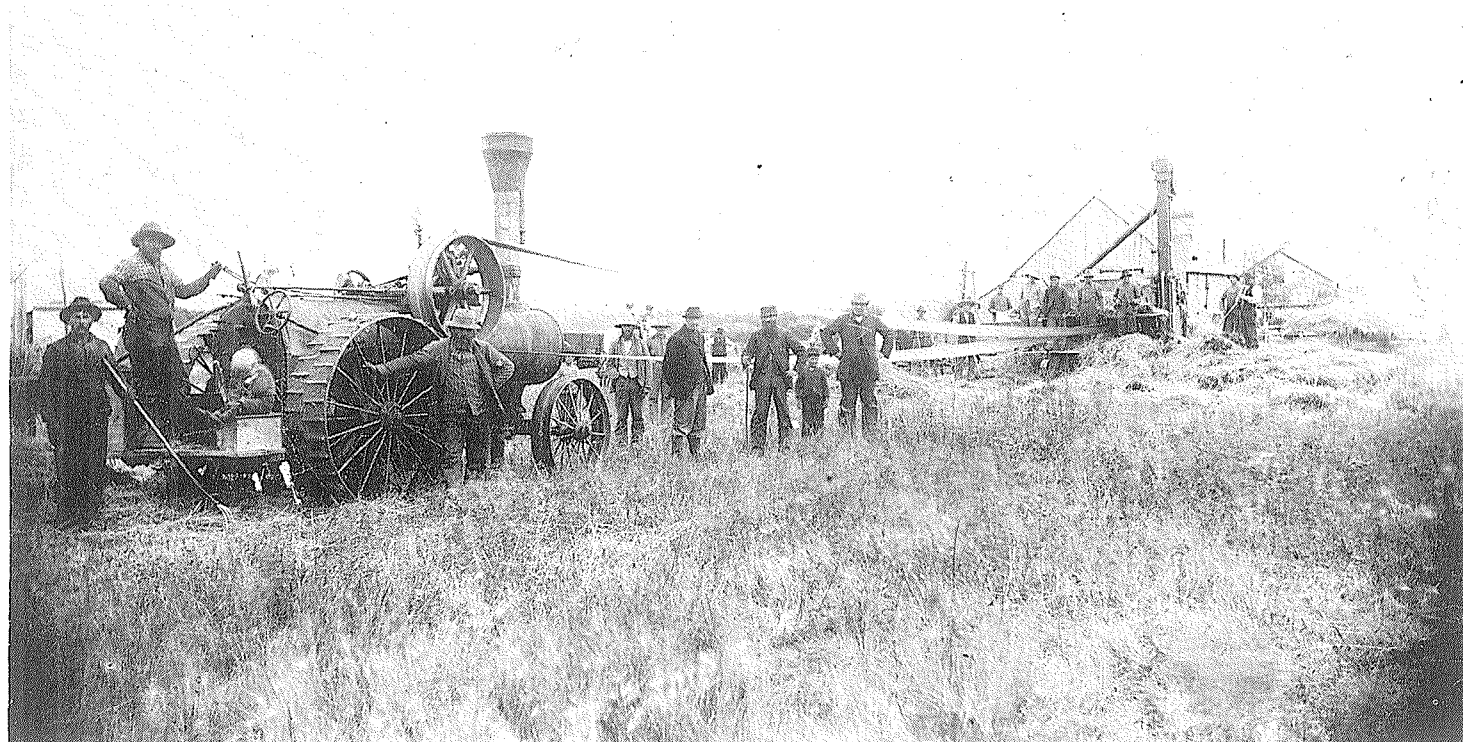
Professor John Warkentin, in his thesis on the Mennonite settlements, writes: "The threshing block . . . was pulled over the sheaves of grain by horses or oxen. In the East Reserve it was displaced in 1876, the year of the first sizeable crop, by threshers. The first threshing machine and portable horse-drawn steam engine were brought into the Reserve by Josiah Cohoe, a Clearsprings farmer in 1876. This was the second portable steam engine brought into Manitoba for farm use; the first, shipped

into the province on the same barge, had been purchased by a Mennonite from the West Reserve.

"The same year, A. J. Friesen, a Mennonite from Steinbach and John Carleton of Clearsprings, jointly bought a horse-driven threshing machine. In the following years the majority of the villages in the East Reserve acquired threshing machines, most of them steam-driven."

What a day it was when the threshing outfit pulled into the yard with the powerful engine drawing the high and cumbersome separator! The old horsepower consisting of three teams was really more picturesque but it was never such a sight as the snorting traction engine with its great straw and water trailer followed by the big separator and the huge, lugged engine wheels leaving deep patterns in the hard soil.

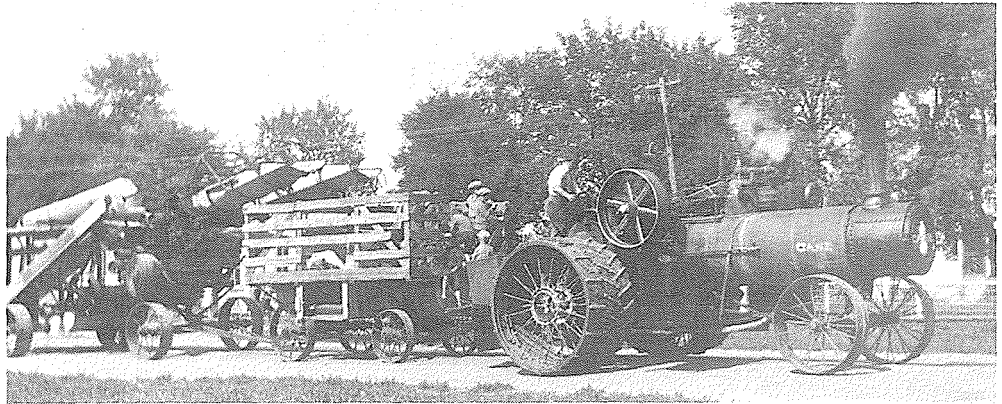
Even though the work in the house for the womenfolk was pressing, everybody came out to witness the arrival of the machine as it made its way majestically to the first set of stacks and cautiously drew up between them. What a temptation it was to wait and see the straw carriers run up, the canvas spread, the



A threshing crew in operation in the Steinbach area at around the turn of the century. The threshing machine was hand fed and three men can be seen standing on the hand feeder. The man at centre fed the grain evenly into the cylinder while the two on the sides were band cutters. They cut the string with which the sheaves were tied and pushed them to the feeder. Not all the men on this picture were involved in the threshing operation. Only one person can be identified: C. B. Loewen, father of C. T. Loewen, is standing in front of the steamer.

For a period of years it was the custom to cut and then stack all grain. The field work could then be done while the farmer awaited the coming of the threshing outfit of which there were few and it was customary for outfits to thresh from September to Christmas. Lack of roads and strong bridges, plus many swampy areas greatly handicapped the heavy machines in moving from one place to another.

—photo courtesy Ed Loewen



At first both the steam engine and thresher had to be transported by horses but when the steamers became mobile a sight like this was quite common on Steinbach streets in harvest time. First came the steam engine blowing clouds of black smoke. It was followed by the tender which had a big water tank and straw rack and then came the threshing machine (note the rare two-wing feeders on this Case separator) which was followed by the red caboose which provided sleeping quarters for the crew. This outfit belonged to Adolf Freund of Friedensfeld, who had one of the smartest outfits around according to oldtimers. C. T. Kroeker was usually the engineer on this engine. For threshing the engine was fired by straw; for plowing or other heavy pulling work, coal or wood was generally used.

Other men with steam engines in Steinbach, Giroux and surrounding area over the years were C. T. Loewen, C. Kroeker, Ben S. Rempel, Fred Acres, Wm. Cohoe, Fred Schalla, Peter Wiebe, Peter P. Reimer, and Peter P. Funk.

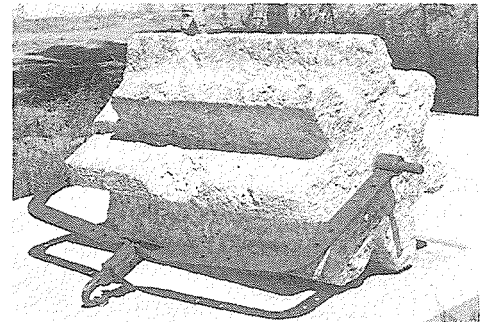
—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

great belt beginning to turn and then the pitchers climbing up first on the high separator and then on to the stacks to wait for their signal. When the signal was given and the big bell began to turn, they would start to throw down sheaves to the two bandcutters below who stood ready with their knives to cut the twine. Then the feeder man would feed the sheaves evenly into the cylinder. This was not only a hard job but a dangerous one as well, as the feeder man had to watch both the knives of the bandcutters and also the mouth of the machine where a hand could very easily be caught.

All the belts and wheels began to turn faster, until the rhythmic sound settled into a roaring hum, the yellow straw coming catapulting over the top of the carrier like a cloud of gold, veering and twisting in the wind.

Another hard and dusty job was on the straw stack as sometimes the straw had to be pushed back a considerable stretch to make room. In hot weather this was very distasteful work.

For many years all the threshed grain was put into bags and for years the second story of the residences were used as granaries. All the grain was carried on the farmer's back up a very steep ladder and in semi-darkness.



The threshing stone at the Mennonite Village Museum. The flail was the first instrument used for threshing in the East Reserve. After this came the threshing stone and then there was the separator or threshing machine which was followed by the modern combine. The flail was used only very little because the Mennonites had already used the threshing stone in Russia and probably built threshing stones within a year or two following their arrival here in 1874. The stone would be dragged over the grain by oxen or horses. The grain would be spread on a 10-foot-wide track in an approximately 50-foot-wide circle.

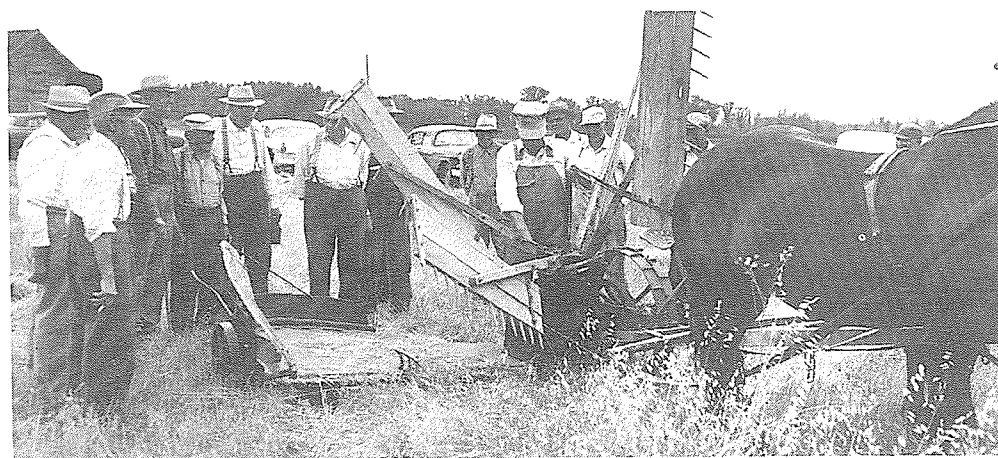
The threshing stone was only used very little in the East Reserve, mainly in 1875, because threshing machines made their appearance by 1876. Proof that these stones were used here, however, was provided when a stone was found in recent years on the Rev. Jacob Epp property on McKenzie Road.

The stone in this picture was found at the village of Rhineland in the West Reserve. It is cut out of solid rock.

—Derksen Printers photo



Erdman Penner, seen here with his wife, played an important role in the history of the East and West Mennonite Reserves. Arriving here with the first Mennonite immigrants in 1874, Mr. Penner was in charge of the gold which the Mennonites had brought with them from Russia after selling their properties. Mr. Penner, in partnership with Otto Schultz (a German Canadian) started the first store in the East Reserve at Tannenau in 1876 and moved it to Niverville several years later. Mr. Penner also operated the first businesses in the West Reserve (first at Neuanlage and then Gretna), and served as the first mayor when Gretna was incorporated in 1883. Mr. Penner is said to have shipped the first commercial shipment of grain in western Canada from Niverville in 1879.



For a few years after the Mennonite settlers arrived in southeastern Manitoba, all hay and grain was cut by scythe but the first reaper appeared in 1878 and it was probably similar to the one above demonstrated by local historian John C. Reimer at his farm in August, 1956. This reel-rake reaper was one of only 356 made by the company. The Massey-Harris company built its first light binder in 1882. The machine above cut the grain and then pushed it onto the ground in bunches with the long arms built onto the revolving wheel.

—Carillon News photo

The improvement clubs led the way

Around 1933 several teachers and the Steinbach Board of Trade saw the need for providing leadership in improving agricultural standards in the community and area and organizing clubs that gave boys and girls, men and women instruction in improving agriculture and homemaking. The clubs had a terrific impact on the community and area and greatly improved standards all around.

P. S. Guenther became leader of the agriculture clubs and Miss Agnes Wiebe the leader of the cooking and sewing clubs.

The girls gained valuable knowledge from the lessons sent out by the Department of Agriculture's extension service and the garden club members learned that a well prepared soil and proper seeding could result in better produce than that grown in the family garden.

The poultry club members learned that the feeding of a balanced mash to chicks from improved flocks resulted in their laying eggs in the winter, something unheard of before.

Young pigs were brought in through the extension service and many farmers began to see the difference between well-bred pigs and the common stock. The first hog show was held in Cor. Kroeker's barn.

A few years after these first clubs were launched, bull clubs were organized by the provincial and federal governments. A farmer in each district was paid to keep and care for the bull. Thirteen clubs were formed.

Dual Shorthorn bulls were placed on the farms of P. H. Wiebe, south of Steinbach, Jac. F. Barkman, north of Steinbach, Tom Mooney, three miles north of Steinbach, Jacob Bartel, Kleefeld and one more at a farm two miles west of Giroux.

Holstein bulls were placed on the Wm. Laing and Wm. Cohoe farms. The other animals were on farms further away.

This was the start of improved dairy herds. Though there were some outstanding herds in the area, notably those belonging to Wm. Laing, Martin Barkman and Wm. Cohoe, most were of rather poor quality and the Department of Agriculture claimed at the time that the Steinbach area held the record for having the lowest average milk production in the province.

(In stark contrast to today when the best herds are in the Kleefeld-Grunthal-Steinbach area and production records set every year.)

These improvements to livestock led to the introduction of the agricultural representatives. In the early years a man wearing a white shirt fresh from the agricultural college was looked upon as a joke. How could he tell an experienced Mennonite farmer how to improve his methods? But as time went on the farmers learned — some the hard way — that what worked on the Russian steppes didn't necessarily work in Manitoba and that most of the advice supplied by the government was valuable and well worth heeding.

Cattle

The number of cattle per farmer has probably always been greater in the East Reserve than in most other areas of the province because the people here have had to be dependent on mixed farming.

At first farmers kept cows mostly to produce cream for the manufacture of home-made butter which was used for barter at a store but then, beginning in 1889, cheese factories started appearing and the average size of herds increased. Some farmers had as many as 20 cows.

Milk production was much lower in the first decade than now because both the breed of cow and feed were wrong. All the cows were of the Shorthorn breed and these animals didn't give nearly as much milk as Holsteins. Holsteins didn't appear in the area until Alex Baird of Clearspring bought some in 1910. Mr. Baird first of all acquired a small herd of young Holstein heifers sired by one of the best bulls in Manitoba and then kept improving the quality of his herd by buying sires in the East and purchasing some of the leading breeders in Ontario.

The first tame hay came into the country around 1900. It was Timothy and though still too coarse to feed cattle, it was good for horses. Cows were fed wild hay along with straw in winter. Nobody ever thought of feeding a cow grain.

Up until alfalfa came in, bloating among



P. J. Penner, one of the first farmers in the Steinbach area, in 1960, to install a bulk milk tank. The coming of the bulk milk tank system marked the end of an era for farmers who had shipped milk by can for decades. The high cost of the tank and equipment forced many farmers to either go modern or get out of the business.

—Carillon News photo

cattle was relatively unknown. The same was true of mastitis in dairy cows.

Another of the important changes in dairying came in the early 1900's when cream separators became general among the dairymen.

Though by 1900 most farmers or settlers had one or more head of cattle, attempts to raise them on a large scale were not made and stock was hardly improved.

It was not until the 1930's that there was a marked change. In 1933 the agricultural committee of the Steinbach Board of Trade saw the need for better stock and undertook to obtain and provide it to the farmers of the area. (See previous article: The Improvement Clubs led the way.)

That year the committee under the able leadership of P. S. Guenther and J. G. Kornelsen organized eight boys and girls clubs (four garden, poultry, seed, bacon and grain) with a total membership of 85. Eleven associates for

the improvement of dairy herds were started and fairs and exhibitions planned and held.

With more and more cheese factories re-opening in these years, herds became larger and a greater interest in a better quality of animal developed.

In the spring of 1956 there were some 60,000 head of cattle in southeastern Manitoba. Of these, some 20,000 were dairy cattle, 20,000 were of the beef type and the remainder would be classified as dual purpose.

Of the seven municipalities involved, Hanover was tied with Stuartburn with 12,000 each.

The dairy cattle in these years were concentrated in the municipalities of Hanover, La Broquerie and DeSalaberry. The Holstein-Friesian breed was (and still is) predominant all through these areas. The "Holstein", as it is generally called, proved to be extremely good at producing milk economically. It was able to convert the heavy forage crops into milk and capable of withstanding extreme temperatures both in winter and summer.

The milk from the majority of the dairy cattle in 1956 was shipped directly to Winnipeg as fluid milk. The milk from the dual purpose and other milk-producing cattle (comprised of a mixture of Shorthorn, Hereford and Holstein) was used in the cream trade, shipped to the cheese factories or used as a supplement to farm grains fed to calves, pigs and chickens on the farm.

Outstanding improvement has been made in the quality of dairy cows in the last few decades. Various projects such as government bull-purchasing policies, artificial insemination and herd improvement associations have contributed to a large extent.

Artificial insemination of dairy cattle had its start in Manitoba on November 30, 1945 when Joe E. La France, in conjunction with the St. Pierre Agricultural Society, laid down the plans for the units.

Dairy Herd Improvement Associations weren't formed in the area until some seven years later. A considerable number of dairy farmers had realized for many years that a systematic way of checking each cow's production was needed to enable proper quality herd-building, eliminating the poor producers and breeding the proven ones.

As a result, the first Dairy Herd Improve-

ment Association was started in St. Pierre on January 1, 1948 and in La Broquerie February 1, 1948. Another one was started in Grunthal and by 1971 there were 11 in all, at Kleefeld, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Steinbach, Seine River, Stonewall, Red River, Springfield, Grunthal, St. Pierre and Selkirk.

Results have been encouraging. In the Steinbach DHIA for example, the average increase per cow in 1970 was 2,000 pounds milk per lactation, an increase that farmers in the association felt exemplified the success of DHIA.

The first annual sale of high-producing dairy cattle sponsored by seven Dairy Herd Improvement Associations was held Friday, October 13, 1967 in the St. Pierre Arena.

Poultry

The poultry industry became important in the East Reserve in the late 1930's but the early beginnings in the industry took place many years before that.

The well-known and colorful Dr. Johan Peters of Grunthal is said to have had a 120-egg incubator as early as 1902 but he met with only partial success at best. Abr. A. Reimer, later owner of Brookside Hatchery, sold the chicks he had incubated as early as 1913. But it was Peter F. Barkman of Steinbach Hatchery who played the key role in the founding of the industry in this area.

As a young married man he was leader of the poultry club which at that time was sponsored by the Extension Branch of the Department of Agriculture and something like a forerunner of the present 4-H clubs. He was working as a carpenter but in his spare time he raised poultry.

At that time the CNR made an improvement fund available to help the poultry clubs to buy quality grade chicks. The Steinbach area realized \$1,500 from this competition. The chicks came in lots and were distributed among the members of the clubs. At that time a man who owned two or three hundred chickens was a fairly big time poultry raiser. There was only one odd person who owned 500-600.

It was in 1936 that Isaac F. Loewen, P. D.

Reimer, P. G. Toews and Mr. Barkman got together to plan a hatchery which would produce better lines of hens for farmers who wanted to raise hens and sell eggs and also undertake to supply them with the kind of feed that laying hens should have. Accordingly, a shareholder company was founded and the men began to sell shares.

Very few people had faith in the future of a hatchery at that time and they had a very difficult time selling shares. They did finally manage to get their project launched, though only in a very modest way.

An old egg shippers list which Mr. Barkman preserved from that time shows that the founders of the company didn't have all that many hens themselves. Mr. Reimer's flock numbered 366, Mr. Loewen's 400 (both considered big time operators then) and the smallest shipper of eggs to the hatchery had only 31 hens.

The first hatchery was located in a small rented building close to the present hatchery. In its second year, the firm purchased the present property on Main Street. Mr. Barkman was chosen manager, a job he has kept ever since.

In order to make the hatchery a year-round business, they began mixing feeds. This was done by hand with a shovel on a clean space on the floor. Previous to coming in with the hatchery, Mr. Loewen used to mix chick starter on his farm and sell it to some of his neighbors and so when the company was formed, he turned his formula over to the Steinbach Hatchery.

A third hatchery was opened in 1940 when William Dyck of Niverville began a rapidly-expanding operation.

The Blumenort and Greenland areas have become the largest areas in which poultry has become a specialization. Most farms are now small in acreage and feed is purchased from nearby feed mills.

Turkeys have been produced since around the mid 1940's. The Linden and Steinbach area have always had the most producers in this line.

Poultry eviscerating

The first killing plant was started by Jacob U. Klassen of Twin Creek, five miles northwest of Steinbach around 1945. Mr. Klassen started killing poultry part time on his farm and then, as the neighbors found it cheaper to get their poultry dressed by Mr. Klassen, they brought their birds to him. From there it was a natural step to buy live poultry and sell it on the Winnipeg market.

By 1951 Mr. Klassen was not able to handle all the work anymore and two other farmers, Frank K. Wiebe and P. Doerksen, formed the Twin Creek Poultry Killing Plant and enlarged operations to where 2,000 birds a day could be processed.

Then the federal government decided that an eviscerating plant was needed in Steinbach and asked the three shareholders to abandon operations at Twin Creek and run a much larger plant to be built at Steinbach. The three decided they'd rather be farmers than businessmen and declined the offer of assistance.

In the meantime, a group of farmers around Blumenort decided they needed a large killing plant to handle the area's needs and formed the Blumenort Co-op Produce Ltd.

By 1954 the co-operative was dressing 110,000 chickens and turkeys annually and selling millions of eggs.

In 1963 the locally-run operation was sold to a province-wide organization called Manitoba Dairy and Poultry Co-operative. By 1970 it was processing up to 150,000 lbs. in finished meat per day and employing as many as 100 people in peak periods.

What is now the largest poultry processing and killing plant in the area — Friendly Family Farms, Ltd. — had its beginning in 1964. A number of district farmers and businessmen shared in the big venture. President and managing director was Ben L. Reimer, well known for his long association with the poultry raising and processing industry.

The firm expanded several times throughout its history and in 1967 changed hands with Max Freed of Winnipeg becoming principal owner. In 1970 the company employed 115 people and was handling some 10 million lbs. of meat annually.

Sugar beets first grown in 1940

Sugar beets were first grown in the Steinbach-Giroux-St. Anne area in 1940 by the following farmers: Jac. D. Bartel, John D. Bartel, F. D. Kroeker, Peter B. Kroeker, Peter D. Kroeker, J. F. Loewen, Frank G. Penner, Jac. H. Peters, Aaron B. Reimer, Ben D. Warkentin, Abr. F. Wiebe, Frank K. Wiebe, J. J. Wiebe and J. P. Wohlgemuth.

For some farmers, at least, this was a last resort. They'd tried other cash crops, notably beans and corn, with little success in the 1930's and were ready to gamble once more.

But it didn't pay off. At least not the first year. The worms caught the farmers without sprayers and the 14 farmers banded together to build a hand-pump sprayer. Jacob F. Loewen, the only grower still left of the original group, who harvested his 32nd consecutive crop in 1971, still vividly recalls that first year. He got a yield of 2½ tons per acre and went into debt. In 1940 a grower received \$6.65 per net ton delivered.

Enthusiasm for beet-growing didn't die with the first crop though and another man who played a great part in promoting beets and also in building the Manitoba Sugar Co. in 1940 was Steinbach businessman M. M. Penner.

The second beet crop was very much better than the first and as a result, beet-growing became established in the area.

For many years all labor was done by hand and the thinning provided work for hundreds of people every summer. The fall harvesting also employed many. One-row lifters were used and the topping and loading was all done by hand. In the first years 20 cents an hour was a good wage.

For some years the beets were taken to Ste. Anne where they were weighed and then shipped by rail to Winnipeg. Frequently, not enough cars were available and there were hours of delay. With improved roads, the station at Ste. Anne was closed and all beets grown in the Ste. Anne-Steinbach-Niverville triangle were shipped to Winnipeg by truck.

After beet loaders were introduced, hand labor was done away with. Today, machines have eliminated all hand labor except thinning



A beet-thinning crew from the Grunthal-Barkfield district in the 1950's. The truck provided transportation to and from the beet fields in the Niverville-Tourond area. Many young people earned their winter spending money by working for several weeks hoeing beets. Though very hard work, the pay was usually better than at other part time the fun of working together with many others also made the job more enjoyable.

—Carillon News photo

and hoeing. Three-row harvesters load a truck in about 20 minutes and the beets are at the factory within an hour. This allows very little time for evaporation.

Mennonites in the East and West Reserves were growing about 75 percent of all sugar beets in Manitoba by 1955. In 1970 there were around 3,500 acres in beets in the East Reserve. This was lower than previous years be-

cause of the surplus of sugar. In 1970 beet growers were being guaranteed \$16 a ton. This meant that the federal government was subsidizing local growers by about \$3 per ton.

The Niverville — Ste. Anne — Steinbach triangle today grows approximately 10 percent of the sugar beets in Manitoba. Top producer in Manitoba in 1969 and 1970 was Helmut Pankratz of Steinbach.

COMPARISON TABLE

YEAR	NO. OF GROWERS	ACRES HARVESTED	TONS HARVESTED	AVERAGE YIELD PER ACRE	
1940	14	224.2	831.5	3.7	
1969	14	867.2	10,402.944	11.3	- above average
1970	13	598.0	5,723.292	8.8	-below average

Potatoes

Commercial potato farming in the East Reserve has always been restricted almost entirely to a comparatively small number of farmers around Steinbach. This enterprise was born during the depression years of the middle 30's and the number of farmers has decreased from that time. While there once were around 25 growers, there are only two or three today.

The first planter was a locally-built machine.

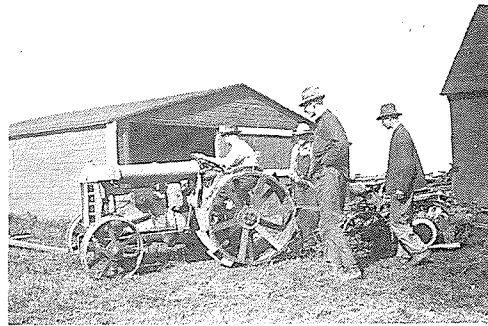
It was designed to protect the sprouts on the seed. The machine was a two-row planter and required two men to feed or drop the pieces into a spout from where the pieces fell into a furrow. Two discs covered the pieces.

For a few years the Steinbach growers controlled the early market because they were always the first to harvest. The Winnipeg North End market, however, set the prices every morning according to their inclination, and often these dropped from 5 cents to 25 cents a day.



Potato harvesting in the Steinbach area in the 1950's. The potatoes were dug, picked, sacked, weighed into 75 lb. bags on the field by strong backs and taken into Winnipeg early the next morning for market.

—Carillon News photo



The first Fordson tractor plowing demonstration held at Chortitz in 1918 on the David Hiebert farm. J. R. Friesen is on the tractor. The advent of the farm tractor became a contentious issue. It was argued a tractor would pack the land too severely as well as pollute the soil with waste lubricants whereas horses spread valuable fertilizer..Mechanically, the first gas tractors were perhaps quite well designed but ignition and carburation were not developed to the degree where they would start reliably.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel

The season seems to have been set back up to two weeks from what it used to be. Today harvesting starts in the beginning of August whereas it used to begin around July 8 and run to July 15.



Leo Smith of the Morris area plowed one whole fall with this 14-horse team hitched to a six-share engine plow. A lad of 12 at the time, this was a feat farmers three times his age wouldn't have cared to duplicate.

—photo courtesy John C. Reimer

The potatoes were dug, picked, graded, sacked and weighed into 75-pound bags on the field and next morning trucked into Winnipeg for the early market. This meant leaving home around 4:00 a.m. An eight-hour day was unknown to a potato farmer. Everybody tried to sell his load for the best price. Today a potato commission sets the price and tells the grower when he can deliver a load.

Bee-keeping

Though early history of bee-keeping in the East Reserve is sketchy, the first beekeeper may have been John Krahn of Grunthal who is believed to have had four colonies as far back as 1892. Later, his son John F. Krahn increased this to around 20. Other pioneers in the beekeeping field were David Loewen who started



One of the first portable feedmills, parked in front of Loewen Garage, Steinbach. This photograph was probably taken in the 1920's. These custom working portable outfits were very popular and used for sawing wood, crushing grain and cutting sweet clover and other feed.

—photo by J. D. Barkman

keeping bees in 1897 and Adolph Mueller of Hochstadt who started in this line around 1900.

Though most communities in the municipality had beekeepers after the turn of the century, the small village of Kleefeld took the lead in honey production in later years.

On the dairy side, there were communities that were ahead of Kleefeld, but when it came to honey, Kleefeld couldn't be beaten. Of the record six and a half million lbs. of honey produced in Manitoba in 1961, 12½ per cent came from the apiaries of Kleefeld producers.

Most of this huge honey output came from bees owned by just eight producers: Ben Dueck, Martin Dueck, Bartel Apiaries, Fast Apiaries, Pete Peters and Sons, P. K. Dueck and P. K. Schwartz and Sons.

The bee men at Kleefeld long ago exhausted all the clover supplies in the district, and for many years now have been boarding a good part of their bees out at widely scattered points in the province. Some have their bees out in the southwestern part of Manitoba between Oak Lake and Virden. Others have them

in various parts of southeastern Manitoba and still others up around Riverton and in the Beausejour districts. Farmers welcome the bees because they help pollinate the crop. This is especially advantageous if the farmer is raising clover or alfalfa.

Drainage has always been a big problem

Drainage has always been a big problem in the East Reserve area. It was a problem that confronted and defeated some of the first settlers in the 1870's and still arises on occasion in the 1970's.

Basically, the difficulty has been that the creeks draining the area from the east to the northwest — the Joubert Creek, Tourond Creek, and Penner's Creek — overflow in spring, flooding the farmland in the western part of the municipality.

Drainage District 5, which took in some of the northern townships, was formed in 1906. Work on the Manning Canal in the northern part of the municipality was begun in 1906 and completed in 1908. The drains for this canal were not properly cleared in following years, however, and became blocked with growth and silt.

The problem became greater nearly every year as new roads into hitherto-undrained territory and more cleared land created more runoff water. In later years the building of PTH 12 was a big cause of flooding. Before this highway cut into the territory in the southern part of the municipality, the water gradually seeped its way into the muskeg. Once roadway ditches offered a runway, though, the water swept along from south of the RM of Hanover till it formed and swelled the Rat River or Tourond and Joubert creeks. By that time it had flooded numerous farms and overloaded the canal.

The natural tendency of the water to run in a general northwest direction has further caused difficulties between the municipalities of Hanover and DeSalaberry.

Back around 1929, a drainage canal was built from Tourond Creek on sec. 31-T6-R4E to the Rat River some nine miles due west. Farmers living along the new drain looked on dubiously, wondering what would happen when all the water from the east would come along this new canal. A year later they found out — heavy rains in mid-summer caused the canal to overflow with the result that heavy damage was suffered by the fine crops.

As a result, some of the farmers got together and closed the canal. This caused still more flooding and policemen were despatched to dynamite the dam. This resulted in several court cases, claims and counter claims and created some bad blood between neighbors.

The incident turned into a controversy that engineers, municipal men and the Drainage Board weren't able to solve for over 25 years.

An arbitration board to solve the problem was finally appointed in 1954, when, after a particularly heavy rain, a number of DeSalaberry farmers threatened to sue Hanover if this municipality would not keep its surplus water at home.

The RM of Hanover, caught in the middle of a bad situation, appealed to the drainage board

for a meeting of the affected municipalities. Two years and many meetings later, the matter was turned over to a board of arbitration.

Following yet further meetings their decision of a cost-shared Tourond Creek drain became law by order-in-council October 24, 1956.

The Tourond Creek drainage canal was to be a three-year project and the municipal share of the cost was apportioned by the board of arbitration as follows:

Municipality of DeSalaberry — 12 percent
Municipality of Hanover — 62 percent
Municipality of La Broquerie — 5 percent
Municipality of Ritchot — 21 percent

The main canal was to start at the intersection of the Piney Highway (Highway 52) and Tourond Creek near Kleefeld, then run due west for a distance of 11 miles to empty into a coulee in Ritchot Municipality.

Work on the 1957 portion of the drain was started in the late summer of that year. The drain was completed till Highway 59.

In 1958 the RM of Hanover also began work on the long-awaited 12-mile-long drainage ditch which was to lead into the completed Tourond Canal.

The ditch followed approximately the course of the Tourond Creek. It begins at the bridge on PTH 12 about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of Sarto Corner, then angles across country in a north-westerly direction till it meets No. 52 highway and enters the canal about two miles west of Kleefeld corner.

The entire project including engineering, surveying and ditching was undertaken by the provincial government.

Because the ditch would carry water originating outside of the municipality, the province paid two thirds of the construction cost and the municipalities affected paid the remaining one third. Only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the drain was located in DeSalaberry Municipality; the rest was in Hanover.

Renovation of most or perhaps even all of the drains in Drainage District 5 was begun around 1956 and instead of the old method of building drainage ditches with steep sides, the new method was to build a wider ditch with gently sloping sides.

\$100,000 was spent by the provincial government in the reconstruction of the Manning Canal in the summer of 1962. During 1960

and 1961 the canal had been widened and deepened over a length of about six miles.

The first fair was held Sept. 7, 1933

Father Takes the Family to the Fair

Pa proudly cranks his model T
They're going to the fair,
The family's packed sardine-tight
But no one seems to care.

They're off! The car strains all its might
The thirsty engine boils
As tugging, chugging up the hill
The gallant motor toils.

At last the sports ground comes in sight,
Pa's smug smile hides his relief,
Then anxiously Ma counts her flock
But no one's come to grief.

Pa wanders off to try his strength,
Then chats with Bob and Jack
And that's the last we hear of him
'till it's time for getting back.

Poor Ma, she's left to wrestle with
The pram, the lunch, the toys
And stacks of empty Coke bottles
Collected by the boys.

As the day wears on and the sun rides high
Ma's smile beams ever bright
Though there's a woodtick where she can't
reach it
And her new shoes fit too tight.
From her moist and freckled forehead
In spite of the careful curl
Of her elegant upswept hairdo
Bedraggled wisps unfurl.

Then Pa comes back with prizes
The children are ready to burst
With ice cream, chocolate, sodas and hot
dogs
Sing hooray for July the first.

Carillon News
- Anonymous

The first Hanover Agricultural Fair to be held under the auspices of the Steinbach Board of Trade took place September 7, 1933. It rained and the display of fowl in the school building was rather small.

Members on the fair committee in that year were Abe Loewen, Peter S. Guenther, J. G. Kornelsen and K. J. B. Reimer.

Despite the fact that this first fair was not the biggest success, the groundwork was laid in 1933 for the many highly successful fairs of later years.

Not only did the Steinbach Board of Trade plan the fair itself, but realizing the tremendous importance of upgrading livestock and produce in the area it went ahead on one of the most important projects ever undertaken in the community.

In 1933 the agricultural committee organized the following boys and girls clubs: four garden clubs, one poultry club, one bacon hog club, one seed club, one grain club.

Aside from this there were associations begun for the improvement of dairy herds. Good stock in cows, steers, calves and hogs were provided to farmers at easy payments.

A good Percheron stud, Monarch, was purchased by the Hanover Horse Breeders Association with money won from the CNR district improvement competition. Various courses were given in various agricultural fields and fairs and exhibitions organized.

This work was begun and carried on for many years with P. S. Guenther and J. G. Kornelsen providing much of the impetus.

Though the tough Depression years put a damper on some projects, the groundwork carried over and with the formation of the Hanover Agricultural Society around 1945, the fair became an annual event.

In 1952, the directors of the Hanover Agricultural Fair could look back on the seven years' existence of the Society and take some satisfaction in what they saw.

By this time the fair was drawing several thousand people and local business firms and out-of-town companies were providing strong support.

The promoters of the fair saw more direct results as well. Only a few short years ago the Society promoted the first boys' and girls' dairy clubs. Looking at the show ring now they

saw many young men and some girls as well showing pure-bred dairy cows.

They saw, too, in the field and garden exhibits, that producers were learning the art of preparing exhibits in an attractive manner and bringing the type of produce that deserved to be shown.

The 1950's saw ever-increasing support for the local fair and the grounds and stalls for exhibits were improved as well.

For some years it was rather paradoxical that here in the heart of the dairy country beef shown by 4-H clubs should outnumber the dairy animals. In 1954, for the first time, tables were turned when there were over 60 dairy-type animals and only a little over 50 beef.

By 1955 the fair had caught on with the town folk as well and merchants ran a "Farmer's Week" in conjunction with the fair. The idea of Farmers' Week was originally conceived to emphasize the important role agriculture

plays in the community and to promote the fair.

The importance that the fair played in the community in the 1950's is shown in the fact that town council, in 1956, proclaimed the afternoon of July 26 a town holiday so everyone could see the show.

Aside from the parades and exhibits, there was the popular amateur show and sometimes even a midway and baseball games.

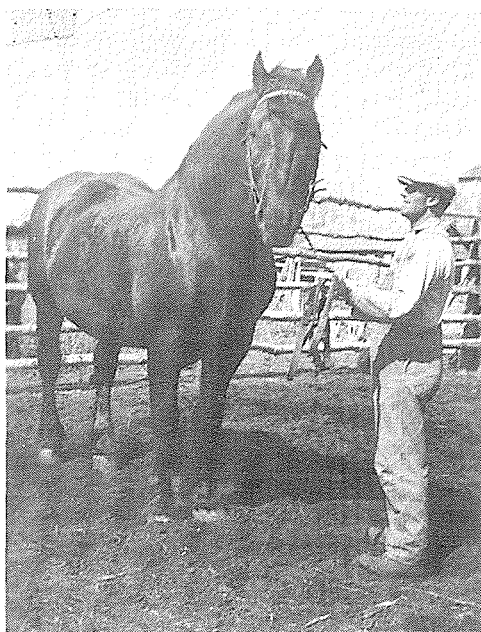
The beef auction has always been a highlight where local merchants bid against each other for the champion beef.

The Hanover Agricultural Fair began decreasing in popularity in the late 1960's. With bigger attractions for the people at Manisphere and Morris, the local fair had lost a great deal of its former appeal and for some reason modern technology and mass production had also eaten away some of the pride that used to be evident in the earlier exhibitors.

Interestingly enough, the trend in the local fair has been that of a gradual drifting away from dairy, poultry and swine exhibits and a gain in popularity for the horse shows.

Horses, of course, always were a part of the local fair but a marked interest in riding horses was noted beginning around 1960. The first independent light horse show in Steinbach was held September 21, 1963. Director in charge of the show was well-known local authority on horses, George Coleman.

Some difficulty was experienced in getting all the events run off in time but the show was a real success with Winnipeg horse enthu-



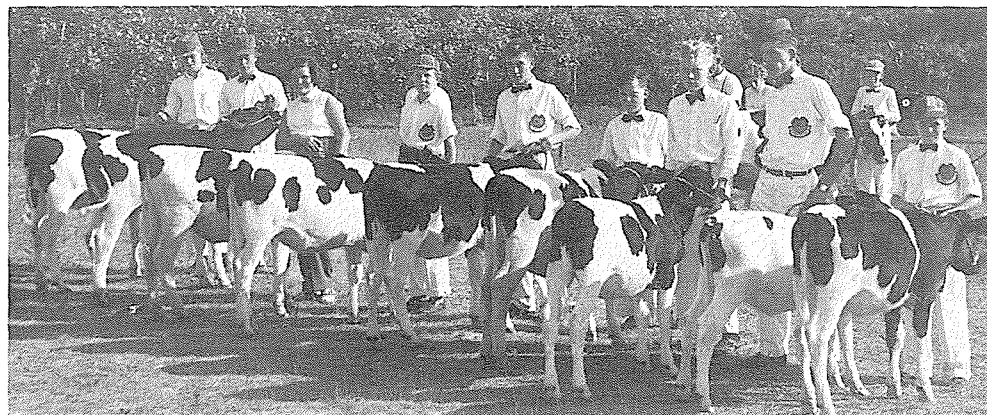
Wm. Laing and "Monarch" a purebred Percheron stud used widely in the Steinbach area for a period of three years in the 1930's. Money to buy Monarch was received when Steinbach won first prize for being the most progressive community in the province in a CNR-sponsored competition. First prize was \$1,000. A committee was formed for the purpose of deciding how to use this money and a decision made to buy this community-owned stud.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther



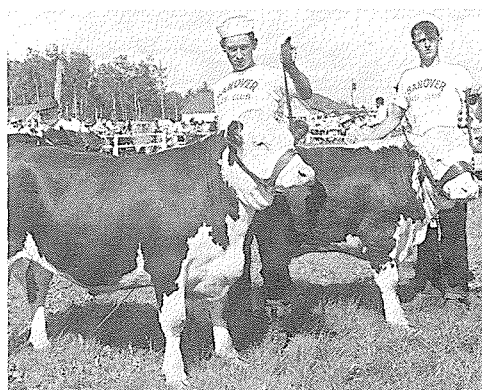
The Clearsprings 4-H Clothing Club, one of several active 4-H clubs in the Steinbach area in 1961.

—Carillon News photo



The Grunthal calf clubs were generally large, well-organized 4-H clubs and members placed well in area competitions. This photograph was taken at the Grunthal fair grounds around 1956.

—Carillon News photo



Hanover Beef Club members showed some outstanding animals at the local fairs in the 1950's.

—Carillon News photo



Judging the poultry exhibits at the Hanover Fair in the late 1940's or early 1950's are members of the Hanover Poultry Club. This club was started by the Steinbach Board of Trade in 1933.

siasts turning out to be the backbone of the show.

Though the horse show was not an annual event through the 1960's, increased interest in riding was noted and by 1967, when the newly-built Steinbach Arena provided facilities for the 1967 Hanover Agricultural Society horse show, three 4-H clubs had been formed to compete in the various classes.

Flower shows

The fragrance of a hundred different types of flowers permeated the atmosphere on School No. 2 on Saturday afternoon, August 26, 1950 when the Steinbach Horticultural Society held its first flower show. Two hundred and eleven entries of flowers, vegetables and fruits made up the competition.

Directors in charge expressed themselves as being fairly well pleased with the flower show for the first year but hoped that next year would see double the amount of entries.

The Ladies' Hospital Aid, which held a tea in aid of the hospital in conjunction with the flower show, reported fair returns for their efforts.



Religion

The story of Steinbach's fourteen churches

by D. K. Schellenberg

The religious life of Steinbach has a long history. It goes back to the time of the Reformation in the 16th century and to a group known as the Anabaptists or Mennonites. It is of this background that some 90 per cent of the town is populated. Twenty five years ago it was almost 100 per cent.

Coming to Canada almost 100 years ago, they forsook farms and land in a country which had been their home for 100 years. They left the sunny climates of southern Russia to come to a country with winters of ice and snow — Manitoba, Canada, because they wanted to serve God according to the dictates of their conscience.

The year was 1874. Although the Mennonites had been granted immunity from military service by Catherine II when they moved from Poland to Russia around 1789, with the passing of time and new rulers appearing on the scene, this privilege came to be in jeopardy.

One of the Mennonite church groups in Russia who were particularly concerned about this was a small group called the "**Kleine Gemeinde**" (little church). This group had had

its beginning as a renewal movement in the "Big Church" in 1812 but had remained a small church in membership. This entire group, consisting of some 700 people, (96 families) emigrated to North America in 1874. Thirty-six families settled in Nebraska and 60 families moved to Manitoba. The latter settled in two geographic areas, the larger group west of the Red River and the smaller group on the so-called East Reserve. Eighteen of these 96 original families settled along the banks of a small creek on Township 6 Section 6 and named the settlement Steinbach.

The eighteen family names of these original settlers were the following: Friesen, Fast, Warkentin, Brandt, Barkman, Goossen, Toews, Reimer, Giesbrecht, Wiebe, Kroeker, names common to all Mennonites today.

So the religious life of Steinbach began with this one original denomination—Kleine Gemeinde, later called Evangelical Mennonite Church.

The first church services were held in homes but since these could not be erected overnight, the settlers had no services the first few Sundays after they came here.

So closely were church and school interwoven these first years that church baptismal instructions — learning the catechism — were given during school hours. The village school



This building was used as a school and Kleine Gemeinde church building up to 1911 when all three Mennonite congregations in Steinbach at that time, the Kleine Gemeinde (EMC); Holdemann (Church of God in Christ) and Bruderthaler (EMB) began building their own churches.

—photo courtesy Dave Schellenberg

was also used as a church as late as 1911 when a separate building was erected.

The first minister of the Steinbach group was Jacob Barkman. He also ministered to the other nearby EMC settlements in Kleefeld and Blumenort. (Mr. Barkman died by drowning in 1875, a year after coming here.) All three areas were counted as one church. The first Steinbach minister was Peter R. Dueck who was ordained in 1893 as deacon and in 1901 as minister.

It is also recorded that an attempt was made in the 1880's to start Sunday school instruction for children but this met with failure because the church was not in favour of this "new innovation." Thus Sunday school for the EMC had to wait for another 35-40 years. In 1926 the same member, G. E. Kornelsen, who had made the first attempt, became the superintendent of the first Sunday school of the EMC. His vision at this time (he died at the age of 75 on February 2, 1933, some six years later) is no less than admirable.

By 1880 Steinbach's population had grown to around 256 but it was still a Kleine Gemeinde farmer village. The village school was under the administration of the church and hiring a good teacher was the obligation of the village fathers. Occasional visits to the school were made by the ministers to see how the students were progressing, especially in religion.

John Holdemann split the Kleine Gemeinde

But the one church unity enjoyed by this settlement was not to be for long. The Kleine Gemeinde elder, Peter Toews, had been corresponding with John Holdemann in the United States concerning a deeper spiritual life and this eventually resulted in Mr. Holdemann coming to Manitoba in the fall of 1881. The outcome was that a revival took place which resulted in the establishment of a new church which went under the name of Church of God in Christ (CGCM). Records state that between one-third and one-half of the Kleine Gemeinde members, as well as the spiritual leader and three of the six ministers left the church at this time to form this new group.

Mr. Holdemann stressed uniformity in

confession of faith and continuity of this confession, "from the time of the apostles to the end of the world". He had devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures, the writings of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips and the Martyr's Mirror. He sought to exercise discipline after the manner of Menno Simons (after whom the Mennonites are named).

For many of those Mennonites who chose not to follow him, the most troubling aspects of the doctrines he propagated were the apostasy of all other churches and the belief that he was chosen to be the leader of the only true church of God. He elaborates on this in a 309 page book entitled **A History of the Church of God**.

Among the pioneer ministers in this church were Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1881-1917),¹ Gerhard Giesbrecht, his son (1921-1969) and Jacob F. Barkman (1921-1948).

Mr. Barkman is especially noted for his work with conscientious objectors during World War II. The later mayor of Steinbach, L. A. Barkman, is one of his sons. The Holdemann congregation today worships in a comparatively new church on Town Line Road built in 1960. Membership is around 180.)

The village school-house which also doubled as a church now saw two groups meeting here on alternate Sundays. This was to continue until around 1911 when each congregation built their own church.

The setback the Kleine Gemeinde received was enhanced by the complete break-away of the Holdemann group. Had the Holdemann group chosen to remain and permeate the whole church with their new revival spirit, the history of the Kleine Gemeinde would have been altogether different.

As it was, it resulted in the conservative members of the Kleine Gemeinde which were left, more resolved than ever to isolate themselves. One historian records that when in 1892 a Bible colporteur from Winkler, a John Warkentin, wanted to hold evangelistic meetings in Steinbach he was told by the elders that they were well served by their ministers. It proved to be a long time before they recovered from the blow.

Since the church had lost some half of its ministers, the first step was to reorganize. The problem was further aggravated because not just anyone could officiate at a reorgani-

zation. It had to be an elder and the elder had gone with the new group.

After considerable deliberation, the brotherhood decided to ask elder Abraham Friesen of Jansen, Nebraska to come and help them. This resulted in a number of ministers and deacons being elected in the years 1882-83.

The doctrines and church practises of the Kleine Gemeinde remained practically the same, without any appreciable change, for three-quarters of a century. Houses, furniture and dress were plain and there was a great emphasis on humility. It was wrong to take pride in material possessions and consequently the shining brass buckles that came with the horse harnesses and later even the chrome-plated lamps and radiator caps on the automobiles were painted black and new inventions like the telephone, top buggies, bicycles and window curtains were also forbidden at first until they were more commonly in use and no longer status symbols.

Other taboos were musical instruments, higher education, sports, entertainment and part singing. It was felt that these new "things" could serve to break down the old, approved way of life and result in members becoming more concerned with material, rather than spiritual matters.

Changes in the Kleine Gemeinde came slowly and not without much deliberation. Sunday school was begun around 1927 with G. E. Kornelsen the first superintendent and P. J. B. Reimer, who held this post for many years, the second. Also introduced around the late 1920's were choir singing and the Sunday night Christian endeavor meetings.

An active missionary interest developed around 1945. Today the church has an extensive missionary program.

In 1952 when the Kleine Gemeinde Conference changed its name to Evangelical Mennonite the church began using the name EM church. Present membership is around 550.

The E.M.B.'s were the third church group

In 1897 the unity of the Kleine Gemeinde was again disrupted by the founding of a third church group, the **Bruderthaler** (now EMB).

A lay leader, Heinrich Rempel, who felt

that a revival was needed in the community and who heard about the renewal emphasis of the Bruderthaler church at Mt. Lake, Minnesota, invited two ministers, Henry C. Fast, Minnesota and Cor. Wall, Nebraska, to conduct such meetings in Steinbach. The result was that a new church was formed which began with four couples.

Their first minister was Abram F. Friesen and their first place of worship was a remodelled house at the corner of Mill Street (First Street now) and Friesen Avenue.

This new church was not to be without its growing pains either. After serious difficulties the very small congregation was reorganized and made a fresh start in 1908, followed by the coming of P. B. Schmidt as pastor in 1909. In 1912 a church was constructed and H. S. Rempel and B. P. Janz were added to the ministry.

After 1908, quite a number of families and young people left the Kleine Gemeinde and joined this newly-organized Bruderthaler church. When in 1912 they built an attractive new church in the centre of Steinbach, an ever-increasing number of young people left the Kleine Gemeinde to join the Bruderthal church.

But the new group also had its problems. Internal difficulties again arose and not until 1925 was the congregation on the way to sound prosperity.

One historian portrayed the EMB group in Steinbach as "the live, evangelical, progressive group in town" and continues: "Although it has been modified somewhat throughout the years, this image of the church in the community still exists to a certain degree." It seems that this was also the church that attracted business and community leaders. This church also pioneered in the improvement of church music by introducing the organ and four-part singing, the Sunday School and **Jugendverein**.

In 1943 the church was to undergo a split where some 70 members left to form the Emmanuel church. However, with new members coming in, the church again grew. The church as it now stands (1971) was built in 1953. Present membership is 329.

The Kleine Gemeinde had now seen the formation of two new church groups, EMB and Holteman, mainly from their own membership.

The fourth denomination to gain a church and membership in Steinbach were the Chor-

titzer. The name originated in 1897 when because of differing views on education from the West Reserve Bergthaler, those in the East Reserve changed their name to Chortitzer.

Early in 1920 a few Chortitzer families moved to Steinbach. Their first church services were conducted in the Kleine Gemeinde church. In 1949 they acquired their own building for the first time. As more and more of their members moved to Steinbach from rural areas, a larger building became necessary. This was built in 1956. In 1964, due to cramped conditions, the church was rebuilt with a large front entrance. The church is still retained today, (1971) at least in part, both in worship services and in the Sunday school.

The fifth church congregation to be established in Steinbach did not come as a result of dissention in the ranks of any of the existing churches.

With the new wave of immigrants from Russia in the 1920's also came the church group known as the Mennonite Brethren. Since there was no MB church in Steinbach, they worshipped with the EMB's at first but it was only a matter of time before they terminated their direct fellowship and organized their own church.

The organization meeting on January 3, 1927 was attended by 38 brethren and seven sisters. Geo. H. Unruh, who was the chairman of their first meeting, announced that there were 65 members in and near Steinbach. The outcome of the election for a leader was that Gerh. Unruh was elected to that position. Another of the early ministers was J. W. Reimer, a noted MB preacher and Bible teacher.

After several years the group purchased and remodeled an old school on the site where the Grace Church now stands.

The present church was built in 1947, remodelled in 1957 and an extensive education annex added in 1970. Membership today (1971) stands at close to 300.

With the later Mennonite immigration to Canada, there were also the Schoenwieser Mennonites. In 1935 there were eight families living in Steinbach who belonged to this group. Not being acquainted with the customs and habits of the public worship of the existing churches, they decided to form their own group. Every third Sunday they had services in the Evangelical Mennonite (EM) church.

In 1938 the group decided to begin regular weekly services. They did this in a rental building on Hanover Street. Isaac Warkentin was their first minister and their first new church building was erected in 1941.

The present name, Steinbach Mennonite Church, was adopted in 1942.

After the third wave of Mennonite immigration (1945-46) from Russia, some 30 additional families found their way to Steinbach and to fellowship in this church. One result of this added membership was that a new church was built on the corner of Barkman and Hanover in 1951 with an educational wing added in 1957.

Ministers who have served here are P. J. Reimer, W. J. Peters, Frank Froese, H. P. Friesen, and Frank Isaac who is also the present minister. Present membership is around 300.

The Steinbach Bergthaler Church dates its beginning to the year 1937. With many Chortitzer families moving to Paraguay in 1927, landless Bergthaler people moved to the East Reserve from the West Reserve resulting in this new congregation beginning meetings in Steinbach.

The first services were conducted by Rev. Heinrichs of Barkfield. Regular services began in 1939 under the leadership of D. D. Klassen. Meetings were held at first in the EM church and later in the local Bible School. Their first building was a remodeled school house.

Later in the '50's they began construction of their own church which was not completed till about 1960.

Ministers who have served here are Wm. Heinrichs, Dav. D. Klassen, P. J. Loewen, Jacob Funk, John Hoepfner, Wm. Funk, and the present pastor, Abe Hiebert.

The Bergthaler church has 160 members at present.

The sixth Mennonite congregation in Steinbach again originated as the result of dissention. As in the Kleine Gemeinde of 1898, so in the E.M.B., whose roots lay in the Kleine Gemeinde, there was a spirit of unrest which reportedly centered around two main issues: church discipline and the doctrine of non-resistance. After Conference officials heard about the general unrest in Manitoba and the particular complaints, they sent represen-

tatives to Steinbach to try and reconcile the differences. Their recommendation was that the church be formally dissolved and the members go through a technical process of recommitment and decision making. This resolution, acted upon, apparently did not heal old wounds and in October, 1943 the matter was brought to a head with some 70 members leaving and forming the Emmanuel Mission Church.

In the early 1950's they affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church of America and changed their name to Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church. In 1970, 94 per cent of the members came from Mennonite background.

In the early '60's this church which had become a leader as far as missions and evangelism goes, also went through an upheaval which resulted in some six families leaving the church and establishing a new group. This new group fellowshiped in the Kornelsen school till its dissolution in 1969.

The Emmanuel Church has had a number of ministers. The first one was Rev. A. T. Doerksen (1944-1946). Then came Peter J. Gerbrandt (1946-1953), H. G. Rempel (1953-1963), David Berg (1964) and George Dyck the present minister.

This church is noted for its mission giving. The 1970 budget stands at over \$50,000. Present membership is around the 270 mark.

First non-Mennonite church in 1948

The year 1948 marked a historic first for the predominantly-Mennonite town of Steinbach with the first non-Mennonite church being established.

The Lutheran parish of St. Paul lay some four miles south of Steinbach but some of the members lived in Steinbach and by 1948 their number was large enough to begin their own services.

Meetings were at first conducted in the old Kornelsen School. In 1951 the group purchased the old Steinbach Mennonite church on Hanover Street and this building served them until 1966, when the present church was dedicated. (See more on Lutheran churches in chapter on Friedensfeld.)

Sunday, December 2, 1956 marked the dedi-

cation ceremonies of the United Church of Canada in Steinbach. Steinbach was thus getting its second non-Mennonite church.

The premises being dedicated consisted of the former Chortitzer church, moved to a location on the east end of Main Street. Previous to this the United Church had already been holding services at Niverville, Otterburne, Giroux and Clearsprings. In 1950, services were begun in Steinbach in the collegiate auditorium.

Some of the ministers who have served here are Rev. John A. McLachlan and Rev. S. James Hume, who is also the present pastor.

In 1967 the membership was 142, of whom 51 were non-resident.

The third non-Mennonite church to organize in Steinbach was the Pentecostal. For some time members had worshipped in the country some five miles north of town but in 1956 the foundation for a new church was poured in Steinbach on the corner of Brandt Street and Reimer Avenue.

The Bethel Pentecostal is affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. It has some 60 members, most of whom have a Mennonite background.

Steinbach's twelfth church was Mennonite. The church came about when three families from the Steinbach Mennonite church, five from the Berghthaler and four from the EMB left their congregations to form the Grace Mennonite church in 1959.

Rev. G. S. Rempel who had terminated his services in the EMB church in 1957, was called on to lead this new group. He was followed by Leonard Epp in 1966. Rev. Epp left in 1969 and was replaced in February, 1971 by Rev. P.G. Sawatzky.

For several years this group met for worship and planning in the Kornelsen School, after which they purchased the old Emmanuel church building on First Street. Rededication of the building was held on December 2, 1962.

The membership stood at 189 in 1969.

The next Mennonite church to come to Steinbach was the group known as the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church (formerly Rudnerweider). This new con-



Street meetings were held in Steinbach and surrounding communities by several church groups beginning in 1947. This was probably an Emmanuel Mission church group led by Pastor P. J. Gerbrandt around 1948-49.

—Carillon News photo

gregation was organized on January 13, 1963 with 30 charter members.

They have a building located just out of Steinbach town limits on Highway No. 52. The church grew so rapidly that within a year they had to build an extension. Present membership stands at 69 members.

Pastors have been the following: Rev. David Friesen, Rev. Jake Wiebe and the present pastor, Rev. Edwin Klippenstein.

The latest church to join the many existing Steinbach churches is the Full Gospel Fellowship Church. It came about as a result of evangelistic meetings conducted by Max Solbrekken. The severe emphasis placed upon faith healing at these meetings led the leaders of Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle to disassociate themselves from them. The consequence was the beginning of a splinter group in Steinbach.

Three or four families left the Bethel Tabernacle. One family left the Steinbach Mennonite church and several others joined this group. After about a year during which they held services in the Kornelsen School, they purchased the old Lutheran church in February 1966.

United effort for Steinbach Bible School

Any account of the religious history of Steinbach could not be complete without enumerating the many united efforts where churches co-operated to build the kingdom of God unitedly. These have especially come to the fore in the last 40 years or so.

One of the best examples is the founding of the Steinbach Bible Institute.

The first efforts at establishing a Bible school were made in the fall of 1931 with some 20 students taking part. The instructors were Rev. Jac. W. Reimer and H.P. Fast. The course was of three months' duration. After this there was to be a lapse of some four years when there again was no Bible school.

In 1936 several men again started classes. Teachers were John Guenther and J.G. Baerg. There were nine students the first year. The next year saw 27 students present with a second year class begun.

In the spring of 1938 individual members from some four of the Steinbach churches got together to organize the Steinbach Bible Society.

Another teacher, J.N. Wittenberg, was

added to the teaching staff and in October the school was opened with first, second and third year classes.

In 1939 the school moved from the MB church to a new building which is presently Fehler Apartments. This was a great step forward and attendance kept increasing.

The primary objective of the school was to train local Sunday school teachers and also to strengthen Christians in their faith. By 1947 it appeared evident that this primary objective had shifted to the training of young people for service not only in the local churches but for missionary service in all the world. This was due largely to the influence of a new staff member, Principal B. D. Reimer. The annual spring missionary conferences begun about this time seem to bear this out. The first school yearbook also dates to the 1946-47 school year.

With the adding of a high school department in 1948, the school changed its name to Steinbach Bible Academy.

By 1955 the school badly needed more room and this resulted in the purchase of a piece of land on the No. 12 highway north and construction of a large new classroom and administration - dormitory building. Dedication services took place on Jan-

uary 8, 1956. Total cost of the building was \$52,000 with some \$8,500 worth of free labour.

With additional dormitories and other buildings the whole campus today has a net value of around \$145,000.

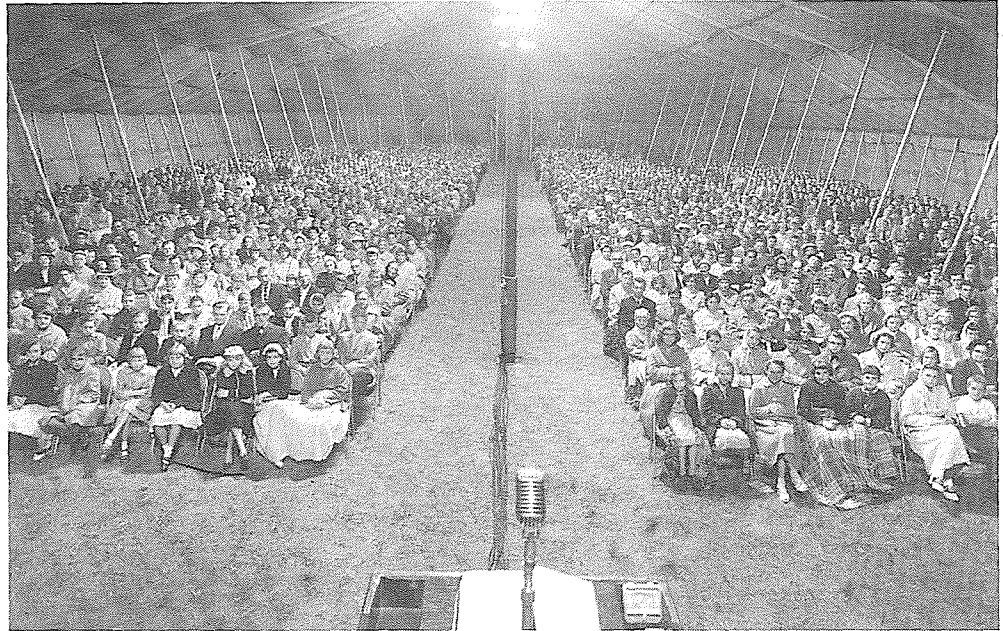
The roster of those who exerted a greatest influence on the life and growth of the school in its formative years would include many, many people. We cannot name them all. But to mind comes one who probably has given as many years of dedicated unselfish service to the school as any one - B. D. Reimer, principal from 1945-66. He saw the school grow from some 25 students to up to 200 in his time as principal. (Mr Reimer is still a pioneer in the true sense and has just started a new church for the Evangelical Mennonite Conference in Clearbrook, B.C.)

Another one would be Archie Penner who served the school for some seven years.

One who has also a long record of service and is still on staff is Rev. Ben Hoepfner.

The present principal, who is also president of the school, is Rev. Harvey Plett, who has guided the school since 1966.

Today, (1971) the school is again under-



The Brunk Revival Campaign at Steinbach in June, 1957 drew thousands.

going growing pains. On the drawing board is a new classroom building for the expanding high school department to be built in the near future.

Present enrolment is around 150.

The school has some 600 alumni and these are scattered in different parts of the world.

Tabernacle used for religious functions

Another example of cooperation among local churches was shown when the first large auditorium for religious gatherings was constructed. No one who lived in Steinbach during those years (1942-1960) will soon forget the "Tabernacle." It has no other name.

Built largely through the efforts and vision of one man, the late A. L. Reimer, it served the community well in its day. Today we would call it a quonset. It measured some 60' by 100' and could seat at least 1,000 people.

Thousands and maybe tens of thousands went through its doors as revival meetings, Bible school graduations and song festivals were held in its spacious interior. For many, no doubt, it has fond memories as the place where they met God in a new way.

The building is still standing on the corner of Barkman and Second Street but due to deterioration its use as an auditorium for religious gatherings had to be given up.

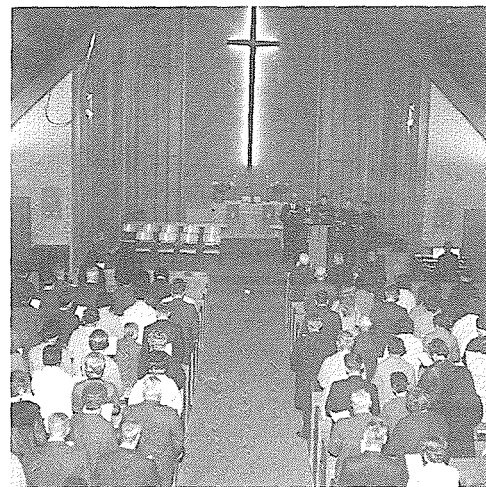
Ministerial Association

In later years Steinbach ministers also formed a ministerial association. Members meet every month or as required. One of the main functions of the ministerial is to conduct united evangelistic crusades. Among those who have been invited to come and conduct these meetings have been George Brunk, Barry Moore and Ken Campbell.

Members of the ministerial at one time, were also engaged in seeing to the relig-

ious instruction periods in the Steinbach Collegiate.

Only a few of the 14 Steinbach churches are not represented on the ministerial.



"Fellow Christians" was the way Father Dionne of the Ste. Anne Roman Catholic Church addressed the congregation of Lutherans, United Church members, Mennonites and Roman Catholics at an inter-faith worship service Oct. 8, 1969 at Steinbach. The first inter-faith worship service involving these major denominations in southeastern Manitoba had five participating pastors: Rev. Hulsemann, pastor of the hosting St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Steinbach; Rev. Leonard Epp of the Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach; Rev. S. James Hume of the United Church, Steinbach; Father Dionne and Father Lavoie of the Ste. Anne Roman Catholic Church.

Red Rock founded in '47

Steinbach people played a leading role in the founding of the Red Rock Bible Camp in 1947. This summer camp for boys and girls is located in the Whiteshell forest reserve some 90 miles from Steinbach.

A tragedy the first year when two young people were drowned proved a severe time of testing for the new organization but this was overcome and the camp began to gain in popularity and size.

Among those who figured prominently in its early growth were such well known

figures as C. T. Loewen, Leonard Reimer, Bill Wiebe and Archie Penner.

Today the site has been equipped for both summer and winter activities with a man in charge the year round. In off season it is popular for retreats, young people's camps and religious seminars.

Steinbach has sent many missionaries

Someone once wrote that Steinbach has more missionaries in foreign lands than any other town or city of comparable size in Canada. The statement could well be true.

The Mennonite church began as a strong missionary movement. Where the other reformers held that the "Great Commission" had been completed, the Ana-Baptists (Mennonites) held that it was contingent upon all Christians everywhere to evangelize and do mission work. However, the severe persecution which followed their efforts, served to squelch this passion and Mennonites became "Die Stillen Im Lande" (The Quiet People of the Land).

The missionary spirit was revived with the emergence of the MB church in 1860 in Russia but it appears that the Kleine Gemeinde congregation did not have foreign missions in Russia nor for their first 50 years in Canada. Nor, seemingly, did any of the other Steinbach churches. Prior to World War II few Steinbach churches had their own foreign missionaries though support for missionaries who were a part of the larger conference to which a local church belonged was common.

With the coming of the Bible School and maybe some other factors, this was to change. Young people also began attending other Bible schools such as Briercrest and Prairie Bible Institute where they got a thorough missionary orientation.

Some 25 years ago, which also goes back to about the time of the first SBI missionary conference, the young people of the Steinbach churches started becoming interested in missions. Many will also recall the visits to Steinbach of men like G. Christian Weiss and Don P. Shidler who undoubtedly played a significant role in forming many lives.

This call to take the Gospel to other lands has come to many. To try and list them all would be almost an impossibility and yet we feel any history of Steinbach's religious activity must also include these native sons and daughters who left home, friends, and loved ones to spread the Gospel.

The following are some of these: Mrs Marion (Loewen) Houghton, Mrs. Kathryn (Reimer) McNeill, Levi Reimer, Mr. and Mrs. Art Janz, Sally Schroeder, Levyna Kroeker, Mrs. Helen (Reimer) Eidse, John Peters, Melvin Loewen, Cliff Reimers, Rollin Reimers, Mary Hiebert, Amanda Reimer, Gil Reimer, Henry Klassens, Gerald Reimers, John Friesens, Eva Koop, Milton Friesen and Margaretha Reimer.

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11. The story of medical care and Bethesda Hospital

As far back as 300 years ago, long before the appearance of the first accredited physicians and surgeons, Mennonite colonists in Germany and later also in Russia, relied on people known to them as **Zurechtmacher** (German) or **Traechtmoaka** (Low German) which translated means, people who set things right.

A **Zurechtmacher** compared fairly closely to today's chiropractor with the main difference being that he tended to do much more than only bone-setting.

The Mennonite people traditionally placed great faith in these chiropractors and even today there is usually at least one person, man or woman, in every community or district who possesses the peculiar inherited skill of putting dislocated joints back in place, setting broken limbs and performing other duties to relieve suffering or pain.

Though there were many respected chiropractors in the East Reserve since the time of the first Mennonites in 1874, three stand out over the years as exceptional even among their kind. These are "Doctor" John Peters of Grunthal, Miss Gertrude Klassen of Kleefeld and Peter P. Friesen of Grunthal. Brief biographies follow. Of the three, only Miss Klassen is still living at this time of writing.

"Doctor" John Peters, wizard of Grunthal

A self appointed chiropractor and bone setter as well as a farmer, "Doctor" John Peters lived and practiced for 30 years in the old village of Grunthal. Beyond any question he was one of the most interesting and colorful figures who ever appeared in southeastern Manitoba.

Many and strange are the tales that are told about the fabulous accomplishments and wizard-like ability of this remarkable man. Rude, uncouth, and in many ways ignorant he certain-

ly was, yet of his skill and ability there can not be the slightest doubt.

Frequently ridiculed as a "fake" by regular practitioners, he on more than one occasion made them eat their words. Hundreds of folk, particularly in the Mennonite settlements, considered him a superb practitioner and travelled by horse and buggy from as far as 70 or 80 miles to receive treatment.

Typical of the extraordinary way in which he often treated people who came to consult him is the case of a young man who came suffering from a case of incurable hiccoughing.



"Doctor" John Peters and Mrs. Peters. The locally-famous doctor was as colorful as this photograph portrays him.

—photo courtesy C. R. Funk

Peters, who had a mixture of crude psychology in his technique, roughly ordered the hiccough victim to sit on a kitchen chair. He then went to the woodshed and returning with a strong rope, proceeded to tie the young man securely to the chair.

"What are you doing?" asked the seeker of relief, as he gave another mighty hiccough.

Peters made no reply as he finished securing the knots. Instead he calmly walked to the woodshed again and this time returned with a high-powered rifle which he silently loaded with a grimace. By this time the lad on the chair had broken out in a cold sweat and was struggling and begging to be released from the chair. He obviously believed that he had come to consult a madman instead of chiropractor. Then Peters spoke. "The only thing to do with a fellow like you is shoot you."

The patient was so terrified at this statement that his hiccoughing ceased then and there. Dr. Peters then untied him, asked for his usual fee, and went off about his own work.

Peters derived his reputation for eccentricity from a number of peculiarities. One of these was his antipathy for people who didn't speak his own dialect of Mennonite Low German. If it was necessary for him to speak English to a patient he invariably charged 50 cents, which was just double his fee of 25 cents for Mennonites.

So many are the stories circulated about this picturesque figure that it is difficult to verify them all. It seems fairly certain though, that most of the stories at least, are based on fact.

It seems that Dr. Peters' was frequently called up to visit and treat people who were patients in one or other of the Winnipeg hospitals but because of the way most of the medical profession regarded him, he was unable to carry out his treatments there in the usual way. Instead, he entered the hospital upon the pretext of visiting the patient during visiting hours. Once safely on the ward, and with the doctors and nurses out of sight, he would proceed to apply his chiropractic techniques, all the while keeping a furtive eye on the door.

Popular legend has it that on at least one such occasion he was detected and stopped on his way out of the hospital by a doctor who intended to take legal action against him for

infringement of hospital regulations. Dr. Peters, so the story goes, reached out as though to shake hands with the doctor in a friendly manner. Catching the doctor's hand by a deft flick of his own, he dislocated his wrist.

Nor was it without some urging that he could be persuaded to replace the paining and swelling joint to its natural position. Thereafter, says the tale, this particular medical man left the "wizard of Grunthal" strictly to himself on any subsequent visits.

It is estimated that during his lifetime the eccentric old chiropractor probably set hundreds, maybe thousands of broken or misplaced bones. He evidently had a remarkably good record in this respect judging by the following story told by Mr. P. B. Reimer of Steinbach, who knew him well.

Said Mr Reimer: "I have seen a lot of bone setters in my day—but none that could touch old Doctor Peters. I remember when old Carl Pachal from Friedensfeld got crushed between a wagon box and a barn door. He had a great many broken bones. They went and fetched old Peters and in a short while he had him back in shape. Eventually Mr. Pachal recovered the full use of his limbs and lived to be 77 working hard right up until the end of his life."

Mr. Reimer also tells the following story about the inimitable "doctor." Evidently, on one occasion, two skeptical young medical school graduates from Winnipeg visited Peters at his home with the object in mind of showing up his supposed quackery and proving at least to their own satisfaction that he was a fake. One of them had his hand done up in a bandage and complained loudly of the way it hurt and said that he had wrenched it. The other said that his neck hurt him fearfully and must be out of joint. Both concealed the fact that they were medical students.

Peters expertly felt the neck of the one and then proceeded to press here and there. "I guess that'll fix you," he said when finished. He followed the same procedure with the supposedly-ailing hand. The two paid their fee and went away smiling to themselves.

At about 4 a.m. the following morning, so the

story goes, Peters was awakened by a knock at the door. His wife went to the door and found the two patients of the day before. The neck of one was swollen and painful as was the hand of the other. Mrs. Peters told them to sit down and wait; "Doctor" Peters would be out "after a while." The old chiropractor let them wait for over an hour before he finally appeared. He went to work and put back in joint the parts which he had taken out of joint the day before. When he finished, he said, "Don't ever try playing a trick like that on me again." The two agreed that they never would and went home very much convinced that whatever else Peters was, he knew a lot about bones and joints.

Vulgar and uncouth describes the language which Peters most frequently used in communicating with his patients. He frequently shocked sensitive people. Had his skill been less remarkable, or his fame less far spread, or even had regular doctors been more plentiful, he probably would have drawn fewer patients. But as it was, people came from near and far, in winter and summer, on foot, bicycle, and with horses and later cars to receive the benefits of his knowledge.

With the large scale Mennonite migration to Paraguay in January, 1927, the Peters family fell in line and joined the trek. Abe Kauenhowen of Steinbach, who also went to Paraguay at that time with his parents, remembers an incident concerning Dr. Peters which occurred shortly after their arrival in that new "promised land."

An unseasonable cold snap hit Paraguay and Peters got out his winter coat and bundled up in it. Said he in his individualistic way: "If I had known I was going to freeze to death, I might just as well have stayed in Manitoba." However, much as he wanted to return, the old "doctor" did not possess the necessary cash for such a move. The next year his wife died, and he followed her to the grave two months later.

Eccentric though he unquestionably was, even by the standards of 40 years ago, Doctor Peters established a place in the folk lore of southeastern Manitoba which is likely to endure for some time to come.

Miss Gertrude Klassen, private social worker



Miss Gertrude Klassen

A well-travelled road used to turn from the Kleefeld highway to the spacious home of Miss Gertrude Klassen, chiropractor. There was no card or name plate at her door but her appointment book was filled months in advance. Her clientele ran into large figures and her talented touch for resetting twisted joints became legend.

But her main zeal in life was not her chiropractic practice - that was come by almost reluctantly at first because people came to her. Miss Klassen's real sympathy lay with children—sick children, or children who could not be properly cared for in their homes. "I have always had a great burden in my heart for poor helpless children" she would say and that was why, during her 40 years of practice, (she is now retired) Miss Klassen, for varying lengths of time, looked after a total of 53 children. One child was taken in at two weeks of age and remained for four months. Others were adopted outright. Some were children whose mothers were sick and who received

her care until circumstances improved and they could be looked after at home; at other times they were sick children who could not get proper care at home. Some were nursed back to health and went back to live with their parents; some remained with Miss Klassen until they grew up and found jobs of their own.

The first charge she took into her home was her seven-year-old nephew John who had been left badly crippled by infantile paralysis. After receiving treatments for some time it was decided that the boy should stay with her permanently since his family was very poor and there was no possibility of getting the care he needed. John gradually improved and was eventually able to do outside chores.

Only a keen sense of business management enabled Miss Klassen to carry through her gigantic task without aid. Shortly after her father died she sold her small farm and acquired a 40-acre farm. To this, at a later date, was added another 80 acres and when one of her "sons" grew up, the 80 acres were sold and she bought the 320 acre farm at MacGregor with him. This not only served to provide supplies, but was a summer home for those children who worked there in summer as well.

The path Miss Klassen chose to travel wasn't always easy. One winter she had to undergo a major operation and was unable to work for months. Following closely on the heels of this were four other major operations—and one daughter spent a full eight months in the hospital with infantile paralysis. There were the war years, when the one grown up boy who did the outside work was away, and the girls did the outside chores as well.

Through it all, Miss Klassen never accepted a cent of charity and if she had the choice she'd doubtlessly do it all over again. At present she resides in the Resthaven apartments.

Peter P. Friesen—doctor, blacksmith and farmer

The chiropractic achievements of the late Peter P. Friesen of Grunthal would be hard to believe, in fact they would have little chance of being believed at all, were they not so well verified by such a large number of witnesses.

Mr. Friesen and his equally remarkable wife raised a family of 15 healthy children all



Mr. and Mrs. Peter P. Friesen before Mr. Friesen passed away in 1969 at the age of 91. Aside from the remarkable chiropractic skills of Mr. Friesen he and his hardy wife were also well known because of their large family. They had 15 children in all and around the time of the publication of this book, in 1971, Mrs. Friesen, at the age of 86, could count some 94 grandchildren and 160 great grandchildren.

—photo courtesy Mrs. Peter P. Friesen

without the help of any kind of regular medical assistance at the time of their birth or while growing up. Mr Friesen was the attending physician at the births of all his children except the first one and at the births of at least 50 others.

In at least one instance he successfully repaired the smashed bones of several seriously injured victims of a head - on collision. Times without number he set simple fractures for patients that came to him from as far away as 70 to 80 miles. During his busiest day he handled a record 50 patients. He once received \$29 in fees in a single day.

At one period in his chiropractic career he served not only his own district but came regularly all the way to Steinbach by car where he held office hours in a private home.

For most of his years as chiropractor he was also blacksmith and repaired up to 464 wagon wheels in a season. Right up until he moved into Grunthal, around 1957, Mr Friesen was still making cultivator blades and plow shares. He even filled in as casket manufacturer on several occasions and on top of that, with the help of his sons, he farmed 160 acres of land which he would often say contained "70 acres of broken land and 100,000 stones."

Mr. Friesen described his chiropractic skill as a direct gift and blessing from God but there was another explanation, too, for chiropractor Friesen's skill. He was a nephew of the celebrated "Dr. Peters" who was Mr. Friesen's maternal uncle. The family is in direct line of descent from the famous Hildebrand family, renowned for chiropractic skill in all the Mennonite colonies in Russia over a century ago.

Mr. Friesen began his chiropractic experience when he was only 17. The family had a lovely yearling horse at home and a cow with long horns gored the horse in the stomach, causing an ugly rupture that would ordinarily have meant having to kill it. Young Peter, who had often watched his celebrated uncle working on human ruptures, decided that he would not shoot the colt until he took a try at fixing it himself. At that time a good work horse was a valuable piece of property. After two or three hours of hard work, young Peter succeeded in treating the injury. His career had begun.

Despite his success with the horse Peter was reluctant to become a chiropractor as he didn't think he could do it well enough. Shortly after he fixed the rupture on the yearling horse, however, a French farmer from near the Red River came to get him to treat a member of his family. Peter thought he would put the man off by making the fee prohibitive so he told him he couldn't possibly go for less than \$2. But instead of walking away the farmer agreed. Peter got into the buggy and accompanied him home where he set a broken leg for one of the members of the family. When he had the job accomplished, the farmer insisted that he take not \$2 but \$4.

Mr. Friesen's worst case was the time he was called to St. Jean in 1926 to attend to the victims of one of the first bad traffic accidents ever to occur in Manitoba. He was summoned by the relatives of several of the people involved and found the victims in the hotel there which had been improvised as a hospital. Although two physicians were on hand Mr. Friesen was given the task of setting all the broken and dislocated bones. So serious and numerous were the fractures that the job required two and a half days to complete. Among the injuries were broken jaws, limbs, backs

and heads. All the victims, according to Mr. Friesen, subsequently recovered with no complications.

Mr. Friesen died in 1969 at the age of 91.

Midwives also filled a need

Aside from the chiropractors, most Mennonite settlements had midwives whose duties involved not only assisting at the actual birth but taking over the household duties until the mother was strong enough to do them herself. Families were much larger in the early days and some midwives would stay for 10 days. Fees were adjustable to circumstances.

Some of the better known midwives were Mrs. Abram Eidse, Mrs. Peter B. Toews, Mrs. John R. Reimer, Mrs. K. Wilhelm, Mrs. Anna Bergen, Mrs. Justina Rosche, Mrs. Abram Sawatzky, Mrs. Jacob Dueck and Frau Reichel.

Mrs. Abram Eidse started her career because doctors were unavailable. Her husband helped her by ordering books and the two were considered to be a very gifted, intelligent couple. They were both well-read and took responsibility in trying situations. Mrs. Eidse served in every capacity, even undertaker.

Mrs. Anna Bergen, now residing at 364 - 3rd Street in Steinbach studied at a school of nursing for nine months in 1936 to '37. She had some very narrow escapes in bad weather while going out on cases. One time a Mr. Braun came to get her in a blizzard. Visibility was so bad and the snow so deep that Mr. Braun had to walk, leading the horse, until even it gave up completely in the deep snow. Mrs. Bergen had to get out and walk and Mr. Braun guided the two of them until they were right near a window from which a light shone.

Frau Reichel was both herb doctor and midwife. She came over from Hungary where she had received her training. This little lady had very strong opinions about things like sponge baths and the use of cold wet sheets for therapy. They say she did not believe in immersing the whole body at once and no wonder with homes being cold and drafty in those years.

Mrs. John F. Unger, a sister to the late Bis-

hop David P. Reimer of Blumenort, practised as a midwife for 30 years. She trained under Dr. Shilstra and a Mrs. Toews.

Another of the very earliest midwives was Mrs. Klass R. Brandt who died in 1933. She was a very determined woman and performed obstetrical duties until she was 75 years of age.

Children, in these days, were led to believe that the midwife brought the baby in her satchel. Actually, it contained her medical supplies, a blue card to be filled out and sent to the government, as well as a copy of "The Canadian Mother and Child," a book the government issued to distribute to mothers.

People stood helpless before the epidemics

Unquestionably the most tragic chapter in the history of the East Reserve deals with the epidemics that swept through the Mennonite settlements three times in the period from 1874-1920. Over 100 people died in the Steinbach area alone.

The first diphtheria epidemic began in 1883 when the Heinrich Leppky family of Niverville district recorded five deaths between July 13 and 24. More and more people became sick the next year, 1884, and in the brief span of five months, March 1 to the end of July, a total of 70 deaths were recorded. Of these, four were aged persons, two were over 10 and the rest were all youngsters ranging from a few months to nine years in age. Their deaths came quickly. From whenever "time of illness" was recorded, death usually followed in four to six days, rarely as long as 12 days.

The appalling loss of life is still more staggering when the population of the time is considered. Exact population figures are not available but the Chortitzer church in 1887 records "246 families, a total of 1,339 souls." The Kleine Gemeinde, the only other congregation in the area at the time, was even smaller.

The epidemic of 1900 was surprisingly similar to that of 1884. The district still had no doctor and lack of medical knowledge was appalling. The inside of the patient's throat was coated with tar as a supposed cure and people smoked themselves with burning tar to avoid carrying germs.

According to the records of the Chortitzer Church, the Peter Peters family of Reichenbach was probably struck hardest by the dread killer. In October 1900, the family lost seven children to diphtheria. None were older than 12 and the seven included two sets of twins.

The deaths came quickly, one after another. The dates recorded are October 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 — a catastrophe in modern eyes that would make national headlines.

Almost unbelievably, this same family had lost three children to the same disease in the July 1884 epidemic.

There were other staggering losses to individual families. Some recorded two deaths in one night.

But the epidemics didn't end in 1900. Eighteen years later, the East Reserve was to be hit one more time ...

When the flu of 1918 hit Steinbach

The fall of 1918 was wet and miserable and provided the perfect environment for the influenza epidemic which took place that year.

The flu epidemic, of course, was not confined to this district alone. It scoured the whole country and even though it killed only a small percentage of those who contracted it, it took more lives than the war that brought it in. It struck at young and old, weak and strong and anyone who escaped it was looked upon as being incredibly fortunate.

The first known case of flu in Steinbach was reported in September. A young family had been visiting out of the district for a few days and on coming home, the whole family had gone to bed with high fever. Soon there were more cases of this strange sickness for which there was no known cure.

As the sickness spread and increased in intensity, resourceful villagers realized that they could not sit this thing out. Three men - J. R. Friesen, J. E. Rehehr and C. T. Loewen, are credited with turning Steinbach's school into a hospital to care for cases where the entire family was sick. There was no doctor. Their activities in the year of the flu only recently prompted a former resident of Stein-

bach, now living in the States, to write: "It was men like these—and Agnes Fast—who were responsible for saving a great many lives in Steinbach during the flu."

The writer of the letter, who wishes to remain anonymous, has also been credited with good works during this time. His mission consisted of travelling from farm to farm, feeding livestock where owners had not been able to go to the barn for days. Then one day, the flu hit him too and he curled up in a granary in the Otterburne district. It was days later when some children in the neighborhood, whose parents were sick, cried for "Uncle Abe." Neighbors realized that their Good Samaritan had not been around for a long time and began a search. When he was found, his lips and tongue were so parched that he could not speak; he had not had a drop of water during his three or four days of high fever in the isolated granary.

The Agnes Fast this gentleman mentions in his letter later became Mrs. Jim Anderson, who with her husband, lived near Lockport for many years and then returned to Steinbach where she presently lives at 305 Townline Road. She celebrated her 88th birthday January 28, 1971, but at the time of the flu she was a vivacious nurse-in-training in Minnesota. She just happened to be in Winnipeg at the time when the "hospital" in Steinbach was being readied. Steinbach was her home town, her parents still lived there, and she gladly answered the call to duty in the school building that was to serve as a crude hospital.

In later years Mrs. Anderson recalled the time well although many names had slipped her memory. "Many girls, and men too, came to help. But most of them soon caught the sickness and became my patients instead," she remembered.

One such case was Elizabeth Friesen, daughter of Klaas Friesen who not only helped and became sick, but could not survive her illness. She was the only person who died in Mrs Anderson's "hospital."

"Our cure was to keep the patient warm, try to keep the fever down and in some cases administer small doses of brandy several times a day. The 'new' remedy at the time was aspirin, which we simply called the white pills" she recalled.

"Time slipped by very quickly," Mrs Ander-

son said, "I recall instances when I wondered why the electric lights had been left on only to realize that night had turned into day and I was still working from the previous day."

So many people helped in so many different ways that she could not single out any names. "But one person I will never forget," she said. "He is Henry Rempel, who always stood by with a cup of coffee when I needed it."

The flu left the inhabitants in a weak, dazed condition. When Jacob W. Reimer died on November 15, there were no funeral services and not one member of the family was well enough to leave the house to attend the burial. The funeral wagon slowly passed the Reimer home and his wife and children looked out of the window to catch a last glimpse of their father. Six men attended the burial but together they did not have enough strength to close the grave.

Mr. Reimer was the outstanding merchant in Steinbach at the time and employing some 20 men, had been known far and wide. It is safe to say that had his funeral been held any other time, no church in Steinbach would have been large enough to house the people who would have come to pay their last respects.

The flu hit with a sudden ferocity and people who died of it were not sick for long. George Goossen, who was then mail carrier from Giroux, recalls that when he was over his bout with the flu and back on the job the postmaster had offered to bring the mail out of the wagon rather than have Goossen come in. Four days later, the postmaster was dead — of flu. Jacob Reimer, mentioned in the previous paragraph, was sick 30 hours.

According to the vital statistics branch, no deaths in Hanover Municipality were attributed to the flu in September and October while 30 were recorded in November. From then on the incidence of sickness diminished and by the beginning of the new year school was again resumed.

"Everyone was waiting for cold weather," Mrs Anderson recalled. "People were forever saying a sharp frost would kill the flu bug."

It did just that, to an extent at least in the Steinbach area and Mrs. Anderson then moved

to Winnipeg where the epidemic continued until late spring.

People who did not catch the disease devoted much time to help others. Many recalled Mr. and Mrs. George Dueck who devoted all of their time to helping the sick. Mrs. Dueck would bake stacks of buns and bread every day which Mr. Dueck would distribute to sick families while he made his daily rounds to feed their livestock. (Mr. and Mrs. Dueck later moved on to Saskatchewan.)

To mention more of the many people who helped sick neighbours would be an injustice since it would be impossible to list them all. Suffice it to say that almost without exception the strong helped the weak without thought of pay or honor. The time of great difficulty brought out the best in man and it is still remembered.

Isaac W. Reimer kept a diary of deaths in the district from which the following excerpt—a list of deaths by flu in 1918 to 1919 is taken:

- November 13—William Reichel
- November 15—Jac. W. Reimer (brother).
- November 20—Elizabeth K.R.Friesen.
- November 20—Cornelius, son of John Siemens.
- November 24—Mrs. Klass K. Friesen
- November 25—Jacob B. Reimer's baby.
- November 25—Mrs Emil Krentz
- November 26—Gottlieb Krentz
- November 26—Mrs Jacob T. Barkman, Heuboden.
- December 3—Our grandmother died at C.T. Kroekers.
- December 7—Mrs Abraham P. Reimer, daughter of G. Friesen.
- December 10—Mary, daughter of Peter Ungers.
- December 13—Mrs Jacob L. Plett, Blumenort.
- December 19—K.R.Penner, Blumenort.
- December 25—Peter Rempel. Morris.
- January 3, 1919—Jacob Rempel, Rosenort
- January 6—Mrs Peter Kroeker and her daughter-in-law Mrs Peter Kroeker, and her daughter, Mrs George Brandt, all in one house at Rosenhof.
- January 14—Abram K. Friesen, Rosenort.

Family medicines and the first doctors

The first pioneers that settled in the Steinbach area in 1874 brought no qualified doctors with them but helped themselves instead as best they could with home remedies and cures.

There were dozens of popular remedies and while some were medically sound, others were questionable to say the very least.

In those days, if you stepped on a rusty nail, the wound would be smoked with sheep's wool to prevent blood poisoning. To open a boil you'd take a hand-sized piece of rind from a cured ham and steam it until soft. Then you'd place a teaspoon of salt on and put the whole thing over the sore as a poultice with the salt covering the boil.

Blood-letting was widely practised on people as well as livestock. There were different instruments on the market for this and these were either a set of needles or a blade with a

WHY OPERATE?

For
APPENDICITIS, GALLSTONES,
stomach and liver troubles, when
HEPATOLA does the work with-
out pain and no risk to your life,
nor loss of time. Contains no
poison. Not sold by druggists.

MRS. GEO. S. ALMAS,

Sole Manufacturer,

230 Fourth Ave. S., Saskatoon
Sask.

Price \$6.50. Phone 4855.

Parcel post 25c. extra.

If this advertisement which appeared in the April 16, 1924 Steinbach Post would be run today, the person responsible would run the risk of being sued for his last cent for false advertising but in the 1920's and even 1930's the manufacturers of miracle cures did a roaring trade and many a person paid out hard-earned money for a bottle of colored swamp water.

spring to open a blood vein. There was generally at least one person in the community or area who knew how to do this and usually a pint or two was taken.

Herbs were used a great deal for making medicines. Very popular, especially with expectant women, was camomile tea. Other familiar herbs were lystock, parsley and Italian grass.

A standby with most of the pioneers was a medicine marked "Colic Remedy". It was contained in a brown, square bottle from which the label "Holland Gin" had been removed.

There were two early doctors

Some years after the Mennonite settlers had become established two men gradually gained reputations as reliable and well-liked medical doctors and veterinarians. Though both were

not really licensed medical practitioners, they had considerable knowledge in their field. They were John Harrison and Isaac Warkentin.

Mr. Warkentin lived approximately two and one half miles southeast of the present Blumenort post office. He was well known and called upon by people of various nationalities. He had recipes for making medicines from herbs and midwives also had him to assist with difficult births.

Practising medicine in those days was not without its humor and the story about Mr. Warkentin and the boy who couldn't stop hiccupping bears this out. A man from the Ste. Anne district came to Mr. Warkentin one day and asked him to come and see his grown-up son who had had the hiccoughs for nearly a week without let-up. All the customary remedies for this had failed and the man asked Mr. Warkentin to come with him and help. The doctor agreed.

Zahnarzt-Preise herabgesetzt

TEETH WITHOUT PLATES

Ich bestrebe mich, die beste Zahnarbeit zu möglichst niedrigem Preis zu liefern. Ich bringe die Preise herab, aber nicht die Qualität. Ich garantiere all meine Arbeit, und gutes Material, das ich gebrauche, ist vom besten.

<p>Beachtet meine Spezial-Preise</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Goldkronen . . .</td> <td>\$5.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vorzahnkronen . . .</td> <td>\$5.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brücken . . .</td> <td>\$5.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Plomben, aufwärts von</td> <td>\$1.00</td> </tr> </table>	Goldkronen . . .	\$5.00	Vorzahnkronen . . .	\$5.00	Brücken . . .	\$5.00	Plomben, aufwärts von	\$1.00	<p>Ebenfalls Spezial-Preise für Platten von \$10 an</p>
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Brücken . . .	\$5.00									
Plomben, aufwärts von	\$1.00									

Unterzählung und Rat frei!
Bringen Sie diese Anzeige mit.

DR. H. C. JEFFREY

Ecke Alexander und Main Str., Winnipeg, Eingang an Alex. Ave.
Auch abends geöffnet.
Beachten Sie die Adresse genau, denn ich habe nur eine Office.

In 1924, when this ad appeared in the Steinbach Post, dental fees were a fraction of what they are today.

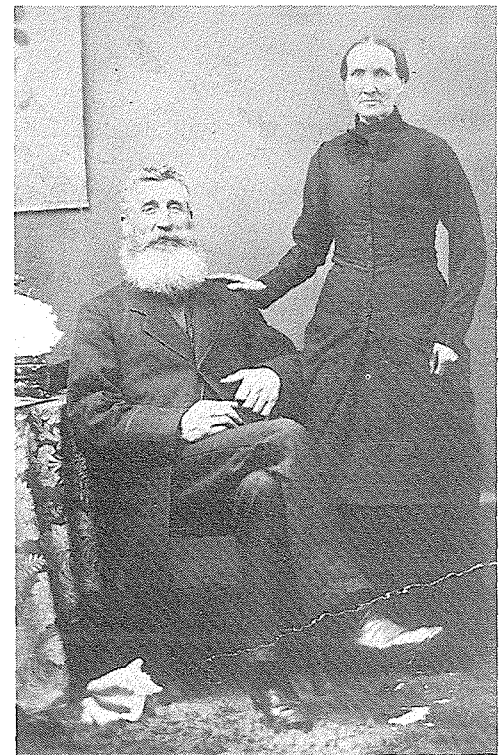
Steinbach Drug Store

Any good doctor will tell you that your system needs spring cleaning.

Let us prepare you a good spring tonic and see how much better you will feel.

J. H. Pascoe **Phone 36-3**

This advertisement appeared in the March 20, 1935 Steinbach Post. With an imagination like that the druggist may have gone on to become a copy writer for a large advertising firm.



Mr. and Mrs. John Harrison of Niverville. Mr. Harrison, though not a licensed medical doctor, was a good veterinarian for those days and treated many people as well as animals. He died in 1923.

—photo courtesy L. Harrison

Before they entered the house Mr. Warkentin told the man that he should place himself at the door and make certain that the boy wouldn't leave the house after he had treated him.

Mr. Warkentin went in to find the patient lying on a couch and hiccoughing away. He asked him to lie face downwards and bare his back and buttocks. The doctor then gave him a real hard slap and quickly left the house. Moments later the father had a hard time keeping the boy from going after Mr. Warkentin.

The hiccoughs were cured instantly.

More is known about Mr. Harrison than Mr. Warkentin. Mr. Harrison came from England to Nashville, Ontario in 1850. Here he married and started farming. He liked domestic animals and was especially interested in animal diseases and cures. As good animal doctors were scarce in those days, neighbors soon began calling on Mr. Harrison for their own ailments as well.

When his large family of 11 children began to grow up he heeded the call to move West. He had to seek cheaper farmland for himself and his boys and arrived in the Niverville district in spring, 1883. Besides his family, he brought with him a few head of purebred Shorthorn heifers which became the nucleus of a good herd.

The Harrison home built near Niverville in 1896 became a familiar place for many who came from far and near to seek medical aid. Mr. Harrison had a drug store of sorts right in his home where salves and medicines were stored. He passed away in 1923.

The first doctor

Steinbach's first and most notable medical practitioner was Dr. Alexander Shilstra whose name was known to thousands of people in southeastern Manitoba. He passed away November 26, 1962 at the age of 90 after serving the community and area for nearly 40 years.

Dr. Shilstra was born in Bandoeng, Java, the son of Friesian parents. His father was sent to Java as a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church. After some years, the family returned to the Netherlands and later emigrated to the U. S. A. where Domine Schilstra (as the name was then spelled) took charge

of the pastorship of the First Reformed Church in Rochester, N. Y.

Dr. Shilstra received his medical education at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at Trinity College, Toronto, graduating from the later in 1900.

His practice in Manitoba began in Winnipeg and Gretna. It was while living in the village of Gretna that he first became acquainted with Steinbach, then a hamlet consisting of one long Main Street with farm homes, a few stylish new residences and several community and business places strung along either side of the dirt road. A small beginning for the present town but even then it was the centre of a large and thriving rural district. There being no other medical doctor here, he set up a practise in the autumn of 1909 and moved his family from Gretna the following spring.

Those were the horse - and - buggy days. The one automobile in Steinbach was not the doctor's. Many a drive of 25 or 30 miles was made with an open cutter in the dead of winter.

It was not long, however, before a move was necessary. While here, Mrs. Shilstra suffered a severe illness, making it advisable for her to seek a warmer climate. So after only two years of residence in Steinbach, this move to B. C. was made in November, 1911. Then came World War 1, bringing an unsettled state of affairs.

Enlisting in the R. A. M. C. early in 1915, Dr. Shilstra served as a medical officer on the Tigris front in Mesopotamia during the campaign of 1916 - 17. When his term of service there expired, he transferred to the Canadian Army and accompanied the C. E. F. to Siberia.

Following hostilities, he remained with the Standing Medical Board for a time. He was again in Winnipeg, employed as a medical examiner on the Pension Board, when he was contacted by some of his former acquaintances from this locality and induced by them to resume his practice in Steinbach after his discharge from the army.

At the time of his return, though not throughout the whole time of his absence, Steinbach was without a doctor. The devastating influenza epidemic of the previous year—1918—had emphasized the need of a resident physician. Moreover, a new government reg-



Dr. Anna Shilstra M.D.C.M.



Dr. Alexander Shilstra M.D.C.M.

Steinbach's first real doctor was Alexander Shilstra who first came here in 1909. Both he and his wife who was also a qualified doctor became well known for their many years of service. These photographs were taken around 1908, approximately one year before they came to Steinbach. Mr. Shilstra was born in 1872 and died in 1962. Mrs. Shilstra was born in 1871 and died in 1942.

—photo courtesy Miss Marie Shilstra

ulation demanded that this district be provided with a health officer, and Dr. Shilstra was engaged to fill this post. It's hard to determine for how many consecutive years his term extended as the first Health Officer of Hanover Municipality, or in which intermittent years thereafter he accepted the appointment, but the total must have covered about 18 years.

In addition, ever since his return to Steinbach, Dr. Shilstra carried on a private practice over an area of wide radius from the town itself. He was assisted in this work by his wife, who was a medical graduate of the Ontario Medical College for Women, class of 1899. In fact, it was while both were students that they had first met.

Mrs. Shilstra was able to give more of her time to medicine as her children relaxed their hold on her apron strings and since it was natural for women patients to prefer a woman doctor, she soon found herself greatly in demand, especially for maternity work.

The bulk of general practice which this dist-

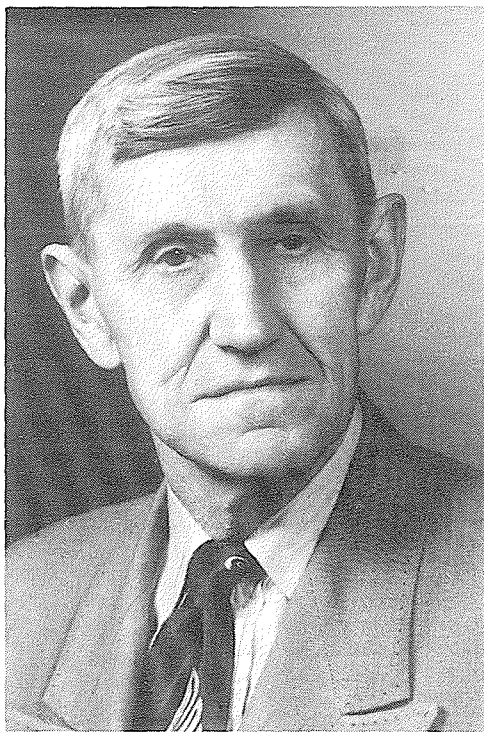
riect provided, despite a normal increase in population, was insufficient to support a second medical man, even an assistant. So it was fortunate that Mrs. Shilstra was often able to relieve her husband and also to accompany him on calls as anaesthetist and consultant. Not only could she provide aid and a feminine medical viewpoint, but also the benefit of her own medical experience.

This experience was both practical and varied. For three years previous to her marriage, she had worked as sole intern in two, successively, of Minneapolis' larger hospitals. To some extent she shared in the mud, slush, and snow with which a country doctor was familiar. She and her husband also did considerable hospital work together after this became possible, first in the small Steinbach hospital which later was known as the invalid home and later in the Bethesda Hospital. Mrs. Shilstra gave herself unstintingly to this work until her death in 1942.

The story of Bethesda

Early in the history of Steinbach and area people gave little thought to a hospital because such an institution was a rarity found only in large centres of population. People worked things out as best they could with their own chiropractors, midwives and home cures.

A total of 55 years passed before something concrete was established in the way of hospital care.



Abram A. Vogt, co-founder with his sister of Steinbach's first hospital, well known genealogical expert and former teacher and businessman. Mr. Vogt was born in Russia where he was a teacher until he came to Canada in 1923. Due to a language barrier he did not pursue his teaching career but went into business with two of his brothers by opening a general store known as Vogt Brothers Store. He operated this store alone for 16 years and devoted full-time from 1958 on, to accumulating Mennonite genealogical records. He died Sept. 26, 1968 at the age of 80.

—photo courtesy Mrs. Jake Kroeker



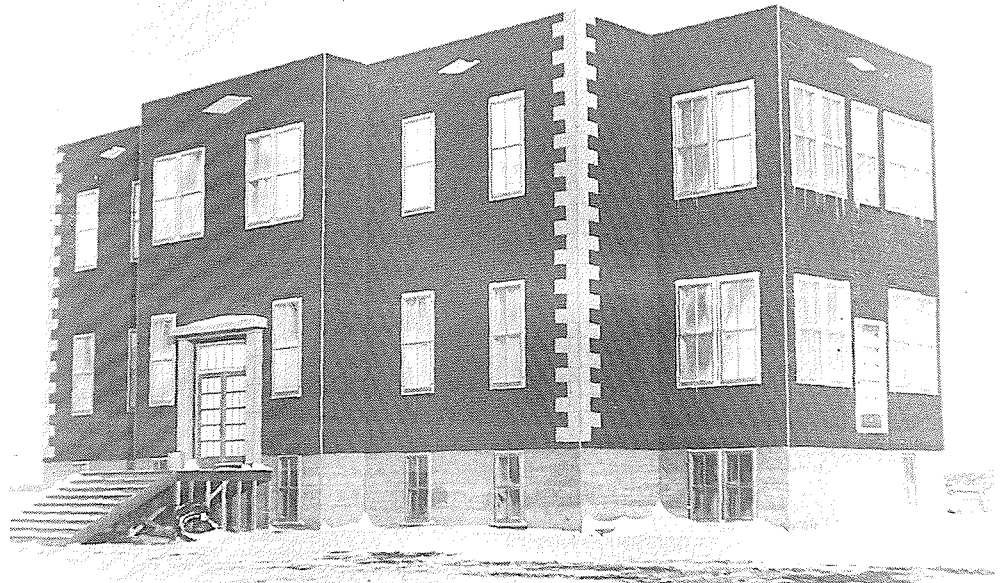
The late Miss Maria Vogt was widely known in Mennonite circles as an outstanding nurse and co-founder of Steinbach's first hospital. Miss Vogt took her nurse's training in Germany and Russia and came to Canada in 1923. In company with her brother and his wife she founded Steinbach's first hospital on Hanover Street in 1928 and stayed on there until 1937 when a new hospital was built in Steinbach and she converted the old one into a home for the aged. In 1941 this home was turned over to the Evangelical Mennonite Church conference and Miss Vogt accepted a position as matron of the new Bethania Mennonite Invalid Home north of Winnipeg. Known as an entirely selfless person, Miss Vogt was the marvel of all who knew her. She passed away in January, 1961.

—photo courtesy Mrs. Jake Kroeker

On December 26, 1928 A. A. Vogt and his sister Marie Vogt, who acted as matron opened a privately-owned maternity home in Steinbach. The home contained two rooms (beds) and a baby ward and was situated on Hanover Street where the old invalid home formerly stood.



Steinbach's first hospital was privately owned. It was operated by A. A. Vogt and his sister, Miss Maria Vogt. Opened in December, 1928, it was primarily a maternity hospital and became a home for the aged in 1937 when the new hospital was built.

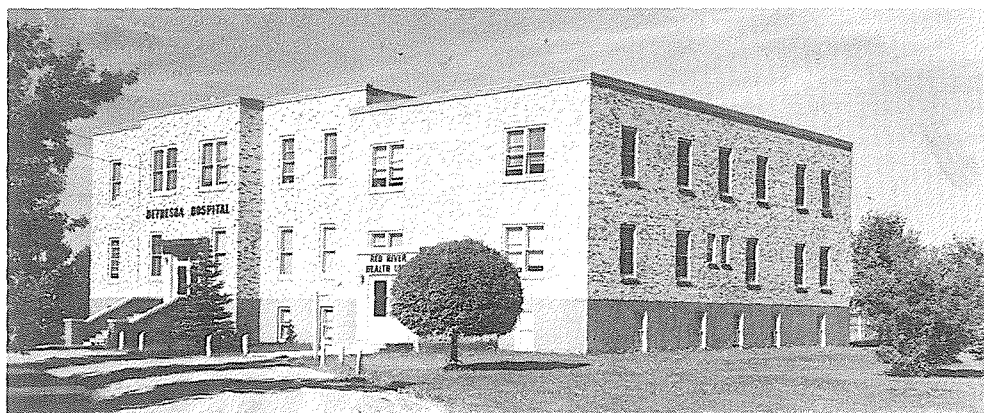


Steinbach's second hospital was built in the difficult depression years. Work on it was started in 1935. The main floor was opened Jan. 15, 1937 and the second floor a year later.



Peter F. Barkman cut the ribbon to declare the newly-enlarged Bethesda Hospital open Oct. 15, 1949. This was a proud moment in Steinbach's history; at this point the only other hospital in southeastern Manitoba was the 10-bed hospital at St. Pierre.

—Carillon News photo



Bethesda Hospital, with a \$103,000 addition (bringing it up to a 42-bed hospital) was completed in September, 1949.

The home operated on this scale for two years. An enlargement to include two additional wards and an operating room was made in 1931 with the result that the enterprising Mr. Vogt was granted a general hospital licence the same year. The hospital fee was set at \$1.50 per day, the gross sum of which was to pay for the entire hospital administration. Hospitals of less than 15-bed capacity were given no government grants.

Primarily a maternity hospital, the first baby was born the same day it opened and before everything was entirely in order. The cost for a mother having her baby and a 10-day stay was \$25. If a doctor made the delivery, the hospital fee was only \$20. It was up to the mother whether she wanted a doctor or not.

Though the hospital filled a great need for the community and area in the way of maternity care, all-around medical and hospital



The new (and present) Bethesda Hospital was officially opened Aug. 1, 1964, just less than a year from the date Aug. 19, 1963 when a contract for \$832,336 was signed by Arlington Builders, Winnipeg.

—Carillon News photo

care were still desperately needed. Sick people were being taken care of at home and here they were not able to receive the care they needed. Prolonged illnesses were hard on the whole family. Costs in city hospitals were prohibitive and besides, they were too far away.

Realizing that it would take the private hospital years to grow to the point where it could provide this kind of service, the Steinbach Board of Trade took the matter in hand.

Once the Board's social welfare committee had studied the problem, it called a meeting with local church hospital-aid committees in late 1930 and adopted a name and a lengthy constitution.

The name of the organization was **Mennonitischer Verein fuer Krankenhilfe** (Mennonite Society for Aid of the Sick) and its aims of providing adequate medical care were to be supported as a mission work of the Mennonites of the East Reserve for all the people of the area.

All Mennonite churches were to take part. The organization was dedicated to assisting the present hospital until more adequate facilities could be planned for and built. The hospital, present and future, was to be supported with food stuffs and donations of labor and cash.

Since Mr. Vogt agreed with the aims of the Society and saw the need for a larger and better-equipped institution as well, he sold his equipment to the Society to help facilitate matters. The nurse, Maria Vogt, who had ren-

dered her services faithfully for years, agreed to keep on serving in her capacity.

The system worked fairly well. Memberships in the Society were \$3 and if a man, for example, knew he would be bringing in his expecting wife in the future, he could bring in farm produce to the hospital till he had a credit of \$20 which would then pay for her entire 10-day stay.

Plans for a new hospital were drafted by a board of directors elected by the Mennonite Society For Aid of the Sick in early 1931. Members included J. G. Toews; A. P. Toews, G. J. Kliewer, P. H. Wiebe (who passed away April 1934 and was replaced by P. F. Barkman) C. P. Reimer, Jacob Bartel, and A. R. Penner.

Plans were for a two-storey building, 36 ft. wide and 72 feet long and with a capacity of at least 15 beds.

Almost right from the beginning the board was confronted with tremendous difficulties. A little reflection upon the financial status of the "Thirties" is enough to make one realize the biggest problem. Since the hospital was built on a free gift-donation plan and not by assessment through taxes, it was very difficult to collect the required money. Many who could not help financially donated their labor and other materials.

However, the building could not be built on goodwill alone and there were quite a few carpenters who had to be paid regular wages (these were figured at 15 cents to 25 cents per hour; the foreman receiving 30 cents), so when material and money ran out, work had to be discontinued in the fall of 1935 a few months af-

ter it had started. By this time the framework of the hospital was finished and in the spring of 1936, by dint of courage and a few more dollars, work was resumed where it had been left off. The outside of the building was only partly finished when they were again forced to abandon construction until the following fall. Another drive and a few more months of hard work by the hospital board facilitated the opening of the main floor of the hospital on January 15, 1937. It was not until a year or so later that the second floor was ready for use.

The patients and staff were moved from the old hospital to the new one immediately. The staff at the time consisted of: Miss Maria Vogt, R. N. and Miss Linda Reimer, R. N. with Miss Vogt as matron. The basement help consisted of Miss Tina Reimer, later Mrs. David F. Giesbrecht, and Elizabeth Loewen, later Mrs. A. T. Loewen.

The men who ministered to the patients' needs on almost 24 - hour - a day shifts were a hardy lot. Aside from Dr. and Mrs. Shilstra mentioned previously, there were, in later years Dr. Whetter, who guided the hospital through the years of its infancy, Dr. Henderson and Dr. Hodgson.

Not only the town but the surrounding communities responded as well; Clearsprings, Giroux, La Broquerie, Kleefeld, Sarto, Friedensfeld, Pansy, Chortitz, Niverville, Greenland, Ste. Anne, Hochstadt, all supported the hospital.

In 1937 the hospital had 316 patients and 145 births. Sixty-three operations had been performed. By November of that year the hospital had a sterilizer and waterworks.

Through the following years there were many changes. By December, 1947 the hospital employed 18-22 people and in the previous year, 1946, there had been 859 patients and 297 births.

Among the additions in equipment made during the years were the x-ray machine, operating table, sterilizer, laundering equipment and furnace and stoker. The amount of money charged patients did not nearly cover the cost of maintenance so the rest was collected from the public through voluntary donations, the ladies' hospital aid and municipal and government grants.

Facilities inadequate again—addition planned

For some time prior to 1947, hospital officials had realized that the hospital was too small and at the 1947 annual meeting it was decided that plans should be made for an addition.

The drive to raise \$50,000 for an addition began on May, 1948 and work on the 28-bed, two-storey addition began in mid-July, 1948.

Estimated costs at this point were \$84,000.

Plans were originally drafted for a \$50,000 addition but while the drive for this amount was being carried on the government announced its new Health Plan whereby the provincial and dominion governments undertook to pay two thirds of the cost of such buildings with the stipulation that they be built to certain specifications and size.

These factors—which changed the original plan of a 17-bed addition to a 28-bed—brought the cost up to \$84,000 instead of \$50,000 and brought down the total required contribution from \$50,000 to \$28,000. At time of construction only two thirds of this amount had been collected (in pledges) and there was still no let-up in the directors' drive for funds.

Open house for the public to view the new addition was held on October 15, 1949. Following a dedication service at the M. B. Church, the ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the hospital door.

The complete hospital now held 42 beds, 15 bassinets and housed the offices of the Red River Health Unit. Modern equipment included an x-ray machine, two baby incubators, oxygen tanks, sterilizers and everything else needed to equip a modern hospital. The medical staff consisted of four doctors: Reg. Whetter, M. Hodgson, P. Enns and Dr. Mierau. The nursing staff consisted of five registered nurses and eight practical nurses and a x-ray technician. A domestic staff of nine looked after the cooking, laundry and janitor work.

At this point the new wing plus alternatives had cost approximately \$103,000. Of this, the government was paying \$66,000.

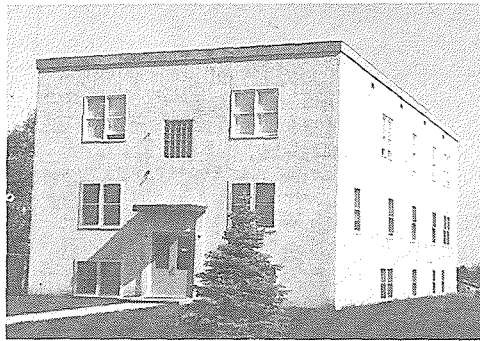
The Bethesda Hospital Society was under the capable chairmanship of P. F. Barkman. Vice-chairman was P. H. Peters and secretary, G. K. Reimer. Members of the board all of

whom played an active part during hospital construction, were D. J. Schellenberg, Is. F. Loewen, D. G. Klippenstein, Neil Unruh, D. L. Isaacs and C. T. Loewen.

Administrator was Rev. J. C. Schmidt.

Upon completion in September, 1949 the only other hospital in the area was the 10-bed hospital at St. Pierre and the Vita Memorial Hospital which was temporarily closed at this time due to a shortage of trained help.

The nurses' residence



The nurses' residence, built in 1953.

—Carillon News photo

With adequate medical facilities now provided, attention gradually focused on another problem in the next two years—that of providing a nurses' residence. Most of the nurses were quartered in private homes and agitation for a nurses' residence began in 1952, with Josephine Giesbrecht the chief crusader.

An intensive promotion campaign was run by the Women's Hospital Aid Society and the Women's Institute with the hospital board in full sympathy. Public apathy was overcome when in August of 1952 a municipal by law for \$60,000 was voted in. One third of this amount was provided by government grants and the remaining \$40,000 was levied on taxable property in the area. The new residence, with accommodation for 32 occupants, was opened on September 22, 1953.

The ribbon was cut by Mrs Is. Q. Friesen then president of the Women's Hospital Aid. P.F. Barkman was lauded for his visionary planning which led to the new residence.

Then, another problem.....

Agitation to place the hospital under municipal administration was started in 1956 when it became apparent that deficits could no longer be met by voluntary contributions as had been done in the past.

From around 1950-56 the history of Bethesda Hospital had been one of slowly-dwindling revenue and increased headaches for the board. Increasing competition as surrounding communities built hospitals, ever-spiralling costs and diminished grants and church donations kept the board facing perpetual financial crisis. On more than one occasion when the hospital faced heavy expenses with insufficient funds the board members personally endorsed bank loans trusting that the churches backing the Society would reimburse them later.

But if Bethesda had sometime found itself in deep water financially, it had, on the other hand, chalked up an enviable record of kindly and considerate treatment of its patients. Right from its very inception it had existed as a church project and a predominantly Christian influence had controlled its atmosphere and policies.

Now, in late February, 1957 the hospital was in the red to the tune of \$22,405 and something had to be done. At the annual meeting that same month it was agreed that members of the hospital board who were official representatives of the various participating churches, attempt to collect at least \$2 per church member to cover an immediate deficit. If this could not be done, negotiations to have the municipalities take over the hospital were to begin.

For this church project to pass into secular control would be particularly painful to the men who had largely controlled its policies for so many years. Yet, in November, 1957, with financial church support lacking, chairman Peter F. Barkman saw the Bethesda Hospital become the responsibility of the District Hospital Board embracing the municipalities of Hanover, Steinbach and small parts of Ste. Anne and La Broquerie.

The agreement became effective Nov. 1. It was ratified by members of the Bethesda Hospital Society at a special meeting.

Under the agreement, the hospital district rented the building from the existing hospital society for the fee of \$1 per year and undertook to provide hospital facilities to the area. Members of the district hospital board were appointed by the municipalities and responsible to them.

Appointed to the Hospital Board were: John Broesky, Jacob F. Loewen, D. G. Klippenstein, and D. L. Isaac for the R.M. of Hanover; Peter F. Barkman and K. R. Barkman for the town of Steinbach; William Cohoe and Dan Oswald for Ste. Anne and La Broquerie.

Steps taken to build new hospital

With the advent of national hospitalization insurance and the cessation of the "Concordia Plan," volume of care at Bethesda increased by 50 per cent during 1958-59 and it became apparent that expansion would be necessary.

While meetings and plans took place in regards to building in the next two years, another important development occurred.

The Bethesda Hospital Society which back in the Thirties started and built the hospital at Steinbach, in February, 1960 agreed to sell its building and equipment to the district hospital board. The price asked: One dollar. Book value of the structure and equipment stood at approximately \$50,000.

The agreement to sell was reached following considerable discussion of a motion sponsored by the board of directors of the Society which read: "That all property, excluding current assets belonging to the Society be sold to the 'District' for the sum of one dollar, providing the inventory account of \$10,574.61 be paid on or before the date of transaction of said property."

In recommending that the Society sell its assets to the district board, directors of the Society pointed out that the original purpose of the hospital had been the welfare of the sick. This purpose was still being fulfilled, they said.

It was also pointed out that the sale would facilitate negotiations now underway to enlarge existing facilities which were urgently needed. Occupancy stood as high as 55 in the 41-bed hospital.

Those who opposed the sale suggested that the structure could be used by the Society to care for permanently ill people who really do not belong in the hospital, or it could be made into a home for the mentally ill. But when the vote was finally taken, 75 voted for the resolution and only 11 against.

Secretary of the district hospital board, Ernie Friesen, reported that the hospital was still losing money on its daily operation. Under the grant formula, the more patients the hospital had, the more money it lost. A special levy would have to be imposed on those parts of municipalities which formed the Steinbach Hospital district to cover a \$25,000 deficit incurred since the district board took over operations two years previous.

Differences in cost-sharing of a proposed hospital by participating municipalities held up a hospital referendum for some time but finally it was agreed that Steinbach pay 20 per cent and the remaining 80 per cent be split between the participating municipalities.

With a resolution to this effect finally accepted, the last hurdle for the preparation of the \$1.1 million money by-law for the construction of a new hospital was finally overcome. Plans for a 65-bed hospital and the renovation of the existing hospital into an extended care unit were approved and on Dec. 13, 1962 the vote was held.

The \$1.1 million money by-law was passed by an 85 per cent majority with 34 per cent of the electorate exercising their franchise, a total of 1,236 voted for and 215 against.

The town of Steinbach registered the heaviest vote with an over 60 per cent turnout. A strong chamber of commerce drive to get out the voters had been in action all day.

The village of Grunthal spearheaded the opposition to the scheme, voting 60 to 22 against. Pansy voted 6-3 and Niverville 37-32 against. All other polls in the hospital district approved the scheme.

Ernie Friesen, chairman of the hospital board, was elated at the results, as were other members of the board. Jubilation reigned throughout the hospital as the results of the vote became known.

The necessity of a new hospital was painfully apparent to everyone at the hospital and much of the public. During 1962 there had

been times when all but emergency cases had to be turned away for lack of space.

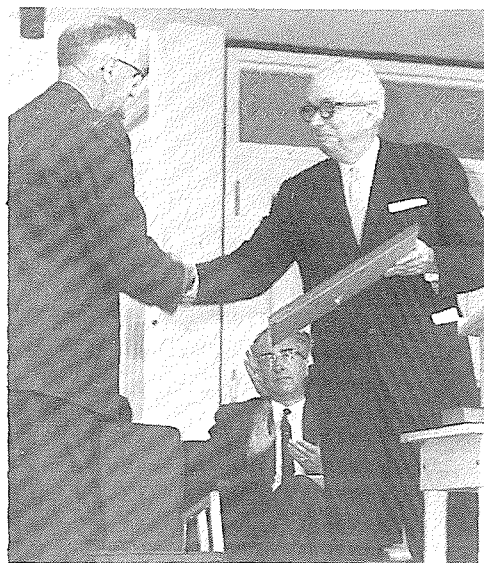
Following the ratepayers approval, plans were finalized. The government directed deletion of 26 feet from the end of the proposed hospital, reducing costs by \$10,000.

Changes made, final government authority to proceed took place on Aug. 13, 1963 and board approval was given the next day. Arlington Builders signed a contract for \$832,336 on August 19.

A sod-turning ceremony took place August 19, 1963 and less than a year later, on August 1, 1964, the new Bethesda Hospital was officially opened.

Several hundred people—many elderly—sat proudly despite a steady drizzle as a long line of dignitaries extended greetings and congratulations. As Lieutenant-Governor Errick F. Willis stated, it was a great achievement day for the area and community.

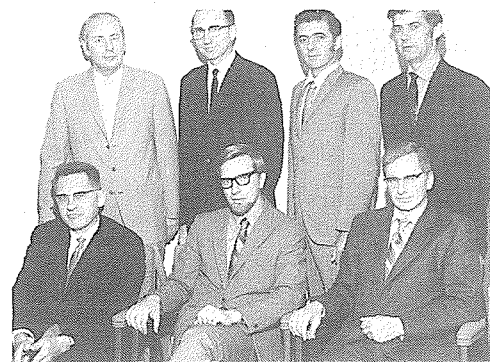
And though it was indeed just that for the many dozens of people responsible for the new edifice, it meant more, far more, to one man present, who, more than anyone else, had carried the burden of hospital care in the com-



In appreciation for his work for better medical facilities over the years, Lieutenant-Governor Errick F. Willis presented Peter F. Barkman with a life governorship certificate at the official opening of the new 65-bed Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach July 31, 1964.

—Carillon News photo

REFLECTIONS ON OUR HERITAGE



The 1970 Bethesda medical staff. Back row: Dr. Karl H. Krueger, Dr. Lorne Penner, Dr. Albert Propp and Dr. Paul Peters. Front row: Dr. John Dick, Dr. Dennis Giesbrecht and Dr. John Choate. The 1971 staff is the same except for one addition, Dr. Oswald Wachtler.

—Carillon News photo

munity since before the first hospital was built over 25 years previous.

For Peter F. Barkman, a quiet, humble man who was presented with a life governorship certificate, it was the culmination of many years' labor.

Only a few of the many thousands who received care in the "old" hospital guessed to what extent that building and the new one owed its existence to the soft-spoken poultry and feed merchant.

Originally a carpenter by trade, it was Mr. Barkman who carried the first 2x4's to the building site on his bicycle. It was Mr. Barkman who had been head carpenter and foreman of the construction crew which erected the building. And it was he who first as board member and later as chairman, guided the Bethesda Hospital Society through some of its roughest experiences.

The Steinbach Invalid Home — a home for the weary

For many years a large structure which had become an integral part of the Steinbach community lay nestled behind the arms of several large old Canadian Maples on Hanover Street.

Over the years people came to take the building so much for granted that it was seldom called by its proper name - the Steinbach Inva-

lid Home. Mostly it was referred to as "The Old Folks Home", the place where the community's aged and infirm could find refuge from the busy world.

The Invalid Home came into being in 1937. In that year a new hospital was built and the old hospital, under the matronship of Miss Maria Vogt, was converted into a home for the aged.

Nine years later, in 1946, Miss Vogt and the residents of the home moved to the newly established Bethania Home near Winnipeg.

The Steinbach home was then bought by the Evangelical Mennonite Church for \$10,000. Completely lacking modern conveniences, the

building was immediately renovated at a cost of another \$10,000. Plumbing and oil heating were installed and eight new rooms added.

In 1951, when the building had again outgrown its waiting list, another \$10,000 wing, containing 12 rooms, was added to the structure and extensive refurnishings made.

According to a 1952 financial report, it cost the home \$1.89 for one person for one day. Above the \$40 monthly fee which the residents paid, all costs were borne by the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. The home received many donations from other churches, ladies' organizations and individuals.

The Invalid Home earned a special place in the hearts of the residents and those familiar with its operation. Back of the home's time-entrenched tradition of an open door for everyone, lay, for many years, the gentle guiding hand of its manager, John R. Toews.

Plans for the building of a new Invalid Home were being made by the autumn of 1958 and actual building by C.T. Loewen and Sons began a year later.

Built at a cost of \$160,000 by the Evangelical Mennonite Churches of southeastern Manitoba, the new home - it was later called Rest Haven Home - was capable of housing 65 residents plus a staff of 20. The changeover from the building in the Sunset Memorial Park area, took place on May 24, 1960.

This monumental event in the history of the



Steinbach Invalid Home staff around 1955. Back row: Miss Elizabeth Barkman, Miss Lillian Friesen, Mrs. Alvin Reimer, Miss Tina Klassen, Miss Susie Wiebe, Mrs. Sara Friesen. Front row: Gus Toews, orderly, Mrs. Wilbert Barkman, Mrs. Friesen, Miss Betty Reimer and Miss Betty Brandt.

—Carillon News photo



The Steinbach Invalid Home in the mid-1950's.

—Carillon News photo

Invalid Home came just 14 years after the E.M. Church purchased the building on Hanover Street from Miss Vogt.

Resthaven Apartments

In 1963 the E.M. churches of Steinbach, Kleefeld, Prairie Rose, Ridgewood and Blumenort decided to study the possibility of building a series of low cost rental units for elderly citizens who were well enough to look after themselves but who could not afford the luxury of maintaining their homes.

The first 12-unit home of this nature was built in 1964. Another followed several years later and a third, the largest of all with 28 units (two doubles and 26 singles) was built in 1970. It was dedicated in May the following year.

The Menno Home

The Grunthal Menno Home for the Aged was officially opened August 21, 1960. Interest in building a home for the aged in Grunthal was first sparked in December, 1957 when a group of Grunthal residents went to the official opening of a similar home in Winkler. Slowly the idea of building a similar home in Grunthal took root and the first meeting of citizens took place on July 25, 1958. A committee was organized and funds collected.

Nearly a year later they met again ... but with a slight difference. Now they had \$2,500 — proof enough that the district could and would support such a venture.

A board was set up and on September 21 the first sod was officially turned and construction begun.

On June 20, 1960, the first occupants moved in. A dream had been realized.

Although he would never admit it himself, the chief spark plug of the whole undertaking was a self-effacing man, J. J. Friesen of Grunthal, who was perhaps better known for his skill in baking bread than for undertaking a large venture of this kind.

The home is 169 feet long and 34 feet wide with an addition in the centre where it is 44 feet wide. It contains 86 rooms in all, counting various service rooms. The building is hot water

heated and equipped with its own water supply and sewage disposal system.

The Greenland Home

The Greenland Home for the aged was built in that community by the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite) in the fall of 1955 after several years planning. It was dedicated in January 1956 and at that time supported three elderly citizens.

The building proved to be too small within a few years and in 1959 an addition was built to bring it to the size it is today with a total of 14 single rooms and four double rooms.

The home is owned and operated by the Church of God in Christ and the board of directors is comprised of representative members from the Greenland, Rosenort, White-mouth, Kleefeld and Steinbach congregations. It receives financial support from several other related congregations as well.

Although considered a senior citizen's home, special attention is given to the infirm, handicapped and underprivileged. The church is involved in nearly every aspect of the institution and services are piped in and special programs rendered. A workshop on the premises allows male residents to do woodwork and repairs and female residents spend many hours at feather-stitching and knitting for the Mennonite Central Committee.

12. Music, culture and entertainment

In the last few decades the local Mennonite contribution to arts and culture has been considerable as several local choirs and a fair number of individuals have gained provincial recognition. But it certainly wasn't always that way because the conservative Mennonite settlers who first arrived here had no place for things of this nature. Life rotated around the worship of God and work and anything that did not relate directly to one or the other quickly came under the puritanical judgement of the church elders. In some **Kleine Gemeinde** and **Bergthal** homes, singing was the only music allowed in early years and even this was sometimes only permissible if the song was religious and sung in unison.

Though most churches have greatly modified their views in regards to music, arts and culture generally, a few still believe that it is more pleasing to God not to use musical instruments or seek higher education because they feel that these can become distractions or avenues leading gradually away from the worship of God.

Steinbach music festival grew out of hard times

The music festival in Steinbach grew out of the hard times of the 1930's and the first festival was probably held around the spring of 1934 in Loewen's garage. Emphasis was on singing and poetry.

(It is worth noting that the garages in Steinbach and surrounding communities helped local culture along by providing facilities for events such as music festivals and fall variety programs which could not be suitably held in churches.)

There was a growing interest in music in

the 1930's and by 1934 a number of young musicians were receiving instruction under the teaching plan of the Toronto Conservatory. Examinations were held in Winnipeg every spring and in 1934 Steinbach students topped the list. In grade one piano, little seven-year-old Molly Campbell, daughter of local lawyer N. S. Campbell outdid everyone with a mark of 86 per cent.

There was also a growing interest in violin music at this time and teacher C. G. Unruh who greatly furthered music and culture in Steinbach and later Grunthal, was leader of a violin quintet as early as 1935.

Despite this growing interest in the arts, the music festival (it was first called the Hanover Music Festival) died out after several fairly successful years and there were no festivals from 1941 to 1945.

On November 21, 1945 a meeting was called largely through the efforts of W. Friesen, principal, for the purpose of discussing the advisability of reorganizing a Steinbach musical festival.

Twenty people attended the meeting and a provisional committee was chosen to find out what support there was in town for such a project.

Another meeting was held December 5 and the machinery for a music festival was set in motion. By February 21, 1946 the adjudicators had been contacted, necessary music had been purchased and the syllabus had gone to press. Membership stood at 57.

On May 30, 1946 the Southeastern Man. Music Festival as it is now called was back after an absence of six years. Officials were well satisfied with the entries for the first year, there being 60 in the musical class and about 90 entries in poetry and choral reading.

Things were still far from running smoothly



The Steinbach String Ensemble under the direction of C. G. Unruh, third from left, around 1953. The Ensemble won the Master Trophy of the Southeastern Manitoba Music Festival for the outstanding performance of the festival in 1953.

—Carillon News photo

however and by November, 1949, the festival was on the verge of collapse. For the past four years it had been the effort of a small group of people who devoted hours of hard work in administration and training of competitors. During these years the festival had grown to the extent where more and more people from within the community had to be prepared to lend a hand as the individuals and teachers involved were hardpressed to keep up. Another great problem was to find suitable facilities in which to hold the festival.

Despite these and other problems, the 1950 festival was held May 31, June 1 and 2 in the auditorium of School No. 3.

It continued for several more years and a closer look at the May, 1953 festival provides a cross section of the top performers in those years.

In 1953 the final concert of the festival was held in the Steinbach Collegiate auditorium and the Steinbach String Ensemble conducted by C.G. Unruh won the Master Trophy.

Following is a list of the various winners of trophies of the music portion of the festival: Chamber of Commerce shield for Choral Singing, any choir or choral group: Steinbach Grade Five, conducted by Miss Margaretha Reimer and singing "Longing for Spring" and "Grasshopper Green".

P. A. Vogt cup for Junior Vocal Sol: Irmgard Braun of Niverville singing "Someone".

J. R. Friesen Trophy - Senior Vocal Solo, George Schroeder, singing "On the Banks of Allan Waters".

Tourist Hotel Trophy - for piano performance under 14 years: Gracie Kliever of Steinbach playing "Slumber Song".

Drs. Whetter and Hodgson - for piano performance, grade 6 or over: Glen Loewen of Steinbach playing the Sonata Opus 14 No. 1 from Beethoven.

I. T. Loewen Cup - outstanding violin performance: Marlene Unruh of R.R. 1, Ste. Anne playing "Fantasies of Greensleeves".

Brandt Construction Trophy - best performance of town or rural band: The Steinbach Boys Band conducted by Dennis Barkman playing "Carmen" Selections.

H. K. Neufeld Cup - Solo performance on band instrument: Gordon Kreutzer of Steinbach playing "Supremacy of Right" march.

Hanover Motors - Vocal duets, trios, and quartets: Blanche Forest and Anita Forest of St. Malo singing "Happy Flock".

Inspector R. Moore Trophy - highest aggregate mark obtained from one-room rural school: Seaton school taught by Harry Topnik.

The final blow for the festival came in November, 1954 at the annual meeting of the South Eastern Manitoba Musical Festival. It was decided here that the event would be cancelled for 1955 but that the society would not be disbanded in the hope that suitable accommodation for the annual event would be found for future years.

Executive members, who had placed their last flagging hopes on the outcome of that annual meeting, registered bleak despair

when the president called to order the meeting of 16 persons. For years the society had solicited the interest and moral support of the community. Almost invariably it had found that the onerous pack-sack of planning, organizing, and staging a festival fell on the backs of the same long-suffering few.

At one point in the meeting members were prepared to give up and go home but then Alf Reimer stood up and reviewed the contribution the festival had made to the area and members who had been examining the feasibility of the sudden and complete liquidation of the festival took encouragement.

Following this meeting the Southeastern Manitoba Musical Festival remained dead as a stone for seven years and culture lagged while the business community enjoyed record prosperity.

After seven years, in November, 1961, the festival came back to life at a meeting in the Steinbach Collegiate auditorium. Elected to breathe new life into the long-dormant organization was a new committee of music lovers who had been bemoaning the lack of a festival for years.

President was Alf Reimer; vice president - Art Rempel; treasurer - Art Baerg; secretary - Melvin Toews and publicity secretary - Mrs. Bruno Derksen. Dr. Karl Krueger, Glenn Loewen and Peter Bergen made up the rest of the executive.

The groundwork was well laid now and the public support great enough to carry the festival uninterrupted through the years from

1961 to 71. The festival grew steadily throughout this 10-year period and in 1970 boasted nearly 1,000 entries.

The influence on the cultural life in the community was considerable. Aside from the festival itself, the organizers sponsored the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in 1962 and the Mennonite Children's Choir in 1964.

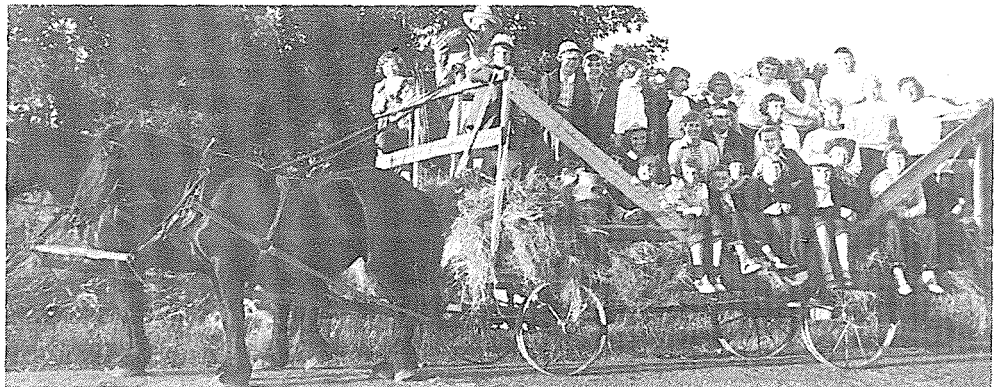
Many of the local performers went on to other competitions. In 1970, for example, a large number of residents from Steinbach took part in the Manitoba Music Festival in Winnipeg.

Of these, 10 were in the pianoforte competitions, seven were soloists, one was a violin soloist and another an accordion soloist. Also taking part in the competition were the Treble Teens choir, (which won top honors in the Senior Grade A choirs competition) and Steinbach Collegiate glee club choir and the Steinbach Collegiate junior high school choir.

Brass bands

Steinbach's first brass band was formed in late 1936 and early 1937. It performed publicly for the first time at a **Jugendverein** (Christian endeavor program) in the E.M.B. church in mid-February, 1937. Commented the **Steinbach Post**: "This is an epoch in the history of our settlement."

Names of the band members were: Abe Goossen, Leonard Reimer, P. W. Friesen, Ed



This was before the days of television and indoor arenas, probably in the 1940's when bobby socks and pedal pushers were the rage. It's a Steinbach group and girls only. Possibly parents disapproved of both boys and girls going on hay rides together.

—Carillon News photo

Loewen, Ben B. Janz, Willie Penner, Linden Penner, Willy Toews, Heinrich D. Loewen, Ben F. Loewen and Jakob Regehr.

In June, 1938, the band had a special concert and this time **Post** editor Arnold Dyck commented that "this year it actually sounded like a brass band."

The band was organized by the young men themselves and they hired various instructors over the years. Ben Horch was one of the first conductors and there were also three instructors from the Salvation Army over the years. Reed instruments were introduced a few years after the band was first organized.

Though not all the original members stayed on for the next 10 years, this band played until 1947.

A reorganization meeting was held in December, 1949 and Bill Toews was chosen as band leader. The band operated for approximately another year before breaking up for good. Many of the original band members had been married by then and moved away.

Boys' band started in Dec., 1951

In December, 1951 one of the former Steinbach band members, Dennis Barkman, organized a boys' band. A trumpet player who had repeatedly won awards at the music festival, Mr. Barkman made good progress, starting off



This Steinbach high school group was organized around 1930 with C. G. Unruh director. Back row: Peter B. Janz, Ed Pokrant, Nick Dueck, Frank Warkentin and C. G. Unruh. Front row: Art Reimer, Ed J. Friesen and John R. Dick.

with 11 boys whose average age was 12 years. Most of the boys had their own instruments and a few borrowed their's from the defunct Steinbach band.

The band became very popular and not only presented local band concerts but played in various Manitoba communities. One of the band's proudest moments came on May 21, 1955 when it played during the reception for the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, governor - general of Canada at Cook's Creek. On that occasion band leader Dennis Barkman simultaneously conducted his 20-piece brass band and directed a choir of school children.



The Steinbach Boys Band in the mid-1950's. Back row: Richard Hildebrand, Gilbert Penner, George Regier, Dennis Barkman (band leader), Gordon Kreutzer, David Brandt, Garnet Reimer and Travis Reimer. Front row: Ray Loewen, Gerald Reimer, Ernie Toews, Glen Loewen, John Henry Friesen, James Penner, and Mervin Brandt.

—Carillon News photo

The Steinbach Boys' Band folded up around 1957 when Dennis Barkman left the community to work for radio station CFAM at Altona and a number of the members graduated from high school and took up employment or furthered their education elsewhere.

In 1960, two former members of the band, George Regier and Travis Reimer, went to considerable pains to revive the band and got it going after some individual lessons in the winter of 1960-61. George Regier was conductor for several years but then took up employment elsewhere and once again the band broke up.

The community was without a band until late in 1969. On September 2, 20 residents put up \$100 each to begin a community orchestra and choir.

An executive was elected and Bill Derksen was asked to take charge of both choir and orchestra. Having played with the Saskatoon Symphony, he was an accomplished violinist and well qualified to take charge of selecting and developing the community's musical talent for the orchestra and choir.

Together with the junior high school music program, which was first introduced in 1969 as well, the community gained three-fold.

The "Russlaender's" had excellent choirs

Of the various Mennonite groups in the East Reserve after 1925, the newly-arrived **Russlaender** (Russian) Mennonites as they were called, were the most conscious of the arts and culture. Though all the Mennonite settlements in Russia had been inner-directed due to previous persecutions in other countries, the Russian Mennonites were more open to the cultural influences directed upon the Mennonite colonies by the large German community in Russia. (The Mennonites had attached themselves culturally to Germany during their years in Prussia and it was only natural, because they spoke the same language, that they would gravitate at least to a degree, towards the rich German culture while living in the Ukraine.)

The Russian Mennonites who settled at Grunthal, Steinbach, Niverville, Arnaud and Ste. Elizabeth loved the German folk songs, poetry and culture. They came to be known

for their excellent choirs and the General Conference Mennonite churches from Grunthal, Arnaud, Steinbach and Niverville held annual song festivals in the 1950's and 1960's (and some intermittent years previous). In 1952 for example, a 160-voice mass choir assembled at Steinbach and several thousand people were in attendance for the song festival. Accompanying the choir was the Ste. Elizabeth brass band and the Steinbach string ensemble.

Aside from the instructions received in singing, many of the participants in these mass choirs played the violin or piano.

One of the **Russlaenders'** most unique and colorful traditions was the **Pulterabend** which was a combination shower and social evening held the day before a wedding.

Organized by the young people, this event would nearly always be held in the **Scheune** which was the large space inbetween the actual house and barn in the Mennonite house-barn. It generally had a hard-packed limestone or earth floor and was used to shelter machinery or bring in hay or feeds for storage.

The young couple that was to be married the following day would be seated in the front on an erected stage at one end of the **Scheune**. Their arrival marked the beginning of the program which usually included Low German plays. Children would recite German poems and present the bride with good wishes, a kiss and a bouquet of flowers. Frequently gifts were given to the couple at the social evening rather than on the wedding day.

The **Pulterabend** and wedding day gave the young people an opportunity to kick up their heels just a bit. Following the wedding ceremony in a church which was often decorated with ferns and flowers, guests would enjoy a hearty meal.

In the evening, young and old alike would go to the farm home of the bride's parents where the young people would play games and sing German folk songs. The older people would sit on benches and chairs and visit while the children played their own games of hide and seek around the farm.

These traditions were still observed in Grunthal and Niverville till around 1958. After that there were no **Pulterabends** as such though social evenings would sometimes be held in an auditorium on the evening of the wedding day.



A "Saengerfest" in the Steinbach Gospel Tabernacle in the early 1950's. The mass choir at these General Conference song fests usually consisted of groups from churches at Arnaud, Ste. Elizabeth, Grunthal and Steinbach. Director here is believed to be Dr. K. H. Neufeld. The Steinbach String Ensemble is accompanying the choir.

—Carillon News photo

Plays and literary programs

Young people in the villages started presenting literary programs around 1913-15. They ordered books from newspaper advertisements and used what material they found appropriate.

The Hochstadt-Gruenfeld group was one of the best. Steinbach and Greenland also had groups. Included in the presentations were short skits and plays.

The parents tried to change the substance of the programs from secular to religious and it was partially through their efforts that the Christian endeavor programs (Jugendverein) came into being.

In later years a few groups also presented Low German plays and one of the most successful of these was the play *Welkoam opi Forstei* (Welcome to the alternate forest service). A comedy in Low German by Arnold Dyck, it was presented in 1951.

One of the earlier plays on record for Steinbach in this later time period was "Go Slow Mary" a three-act play sponsored by the Steinbach "Young Peoples Club" on Saturday, March 23, 1935. There were 12 actors and aside

from the play there was also a violin quintet led by C. G. Unruh and songs by a mixed choir, a men's choir and a youth choir.

The Steinbach Collegiate, which boasted some excellent choirs over the years, has produced annual plays for several decades.

In the 1930's and early 1940's these plays were mostly tragedies, often by Charles Dickens. This tradition was broken in June, 1948 when the collegiate's English teacher, Miss S. S. Johnson, directed the riotous but very successful "Huckleberry Finn, Detective" based on Mark Twain's immortal novel.

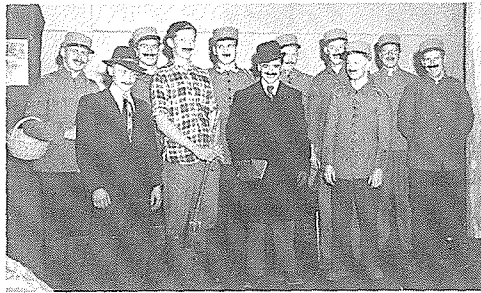
Following that production the S.C.I. spring plays became a "must" for many and the 1956 production of "The Admirable Crichton", another comedy, drew a standing-room-only crowd during its three-night stand. Receiving special audience acclaim in this play were Glenn Klassen, Patricia Mueller and Richard Klassen who were cast into the leading roles.

These productions became more elaborate every year. The 1970 operetta "The Red Mill" drew over 2,000 people in the six performances and some 150 people—students and teachers, were involved in the production. The 1971 presentation of "Oklahoma" did even better, drawing a total viewing audience of 3,000.



"The Admirable Crichton," the annual spring play presented by Steinbach Collegiate students in March, 1956, drew an estimated 1,200 people during its three-night stand. Receiving special audience acclaim were Glenn Klassen, Patricia Mueller and Richard Klassen who were cast into the leading roles. The production was directed by Miss Norma Rempel, with stage and scenery under the direction of John Peters.

—Carillon News photo



"Welkoam opi' Forstei," a comedy play in Low German by Arnold Dyck was presented in several communities by this Grunthal group in spring, 1951.

—Carillon News photo

Another much-appreciated tradition of the collegiate's has been the presentation of the annual Christmas pageant. Just as the plays, these pageants have become more elaborate every year and the collegiate draws a full house for every year's performance.

The A.C.T. Amateur Hours

In 1948 the Associated Canadian Travellers in their drive for funds to fight tuberculosis began sponsoring amateur hours. The performances were broadcast over CJOB and listen-

ers could buy votes at around 25c each for the performers they thought were best.

The first amateur hour was held in February, 1948. A total of \$2,388 was collected by 11 p.m. and the standing of the eleven contestants was as follows:

1. Board of Trade ensemble. 2. Buss and Robert 3. The Five Fruit Stains 4. Clifford Regehr 5. School No. 3 quintet 6. Helen Senkiw 7. Bible Academy double quartet 8. Piano duet - Shirley Barkman and Audrey Toews 9. Mitchell group 10. Double quartet (Grunthal community) 11. Piano solo, Audrey Phillips. Otterburne.

Regrettably, the program was not broadcast due to difficulties on the telephone line between Steinbach and St. Pierre so a rebroadcast was staged March 6.

The audience that filled the auditorium this time was almost entirely made up of people who came in from outside points. This was due to a large extent because CJOB put on a one-hour show before the broadcast, starring a number of performers from the Western Hour.

Swede and Ben Schramm especially were swamped by fans, as well as the Webber sisters who endeared themselves in the hearts of their ardent admirers. The Four Lowe's, accordion stylists, gave a fine performance and

in a more serious vein there were some vocal solos by Alec Patterson and Josephine Chady.

The numbers which these and a number of other radio performers rendered created such an atmosphere that even the most dour-faced pessimists were seen smiling broadly and staid matrons found themselves unconsciously tapping the beat to the tune of "The Beer Barrel Polka."

However, the big thing was still the performance of the top ten Steinbach amateurs. The male ensemble was first on the list as they had been first in the voting up to that time. The trickle of phone calls began. The ensemble was followed by the "Fruit Stains" with their novelty number. Within a short time that trickle of calls had swollen into a torrent. Buss and Bobert were third with their instrumental number and Clifford Regehr ran fourth with a coronet solo. And they went on down the line with phone calls coming in from points such as Giroux, Winnipeg and Carman. Apparently Mayor Barkman's speech went over with the audience as well since one donation was earmarked for "Amateur Speaker."

At the end of the program the male ensemble was leading the "Fruit Stains" by a margin of \$12.50. However, the number of promises in turn gave the "Fruit Stains" a near one hundred dollar lead. The deciding votes were cast about 10 minutes before closing time.

Following the program a controversy developed in the community. The Beer Barrel Polka had been bad enough but now the winners of the amateur show, the "Fruit Stains", were supposed to participate in the A.C.T. finals in the Winnipeg Auditorium and some of the stauncher citizens questioned the wisdom of the town being advertised by youngsters playing "Yankee Doodle" over the air waves.

But the group went anyway, well supported with one chartered bus load and several dozen cars-full of people and chalked up over 1,900 votes to win the show.

The five "Fruit Stains" — Dennis Barkman, Bill Reimer, Jake Sawatzky, Henry Reimer and Lawrence Barkman — were each presented with a wristwatch. No less happy than the boys themselves was their manager-promoter Art Kroeker and his assistant Russell Kehler.

The amateur nights were held in other years despite the controversy in 1948 and in Sep-

tember, 1956 the Steinbach district was even awarded the "CJOB Search For Talent Trophy" presented annually to the community giving most support to the CJOB amateur show and to the tuberculosis control program.

Arnold Dyck—writer and editor

One of the most noted of Mennonite authors in Canada was Arnold Dyck who was born January 19, 1889 at Hochfeld, Nikolayoi, Russia. He married Katherina Vogt in 1918 and they emigrated to Canada in 1923.

Settling at Steinbach, Mr Dyck purchased the **Steinbach Post**, a Mennonite-German weekly from Jacob S. Friesen and successfully continued to publish this popular paper until 1936 when he sold it to G.S. Derksen.

A versatile writer, he wrote in both the High and Low German languages and became best known for his humorous "Koop en Bua" books which depicted the life and philosophy of a couple of Mennonite bush farmers. He also began publishing a literary digest called the **Mennonite Warte** in the 1930's but this lacked financial support and subscribers and folded after three years. He helped organize a Mennonite historical group which printed and published a good number of his histories concerning various Mennonite communities that had flourished in the Ukraine prior to the Russian Revolution.

Mr. Dyck passed away in 1969 at his residence in Hanover, Germany.

The first library was started in 1923

A group of 24 people — mostly the more prominent or well educated — formed the **Deutsche Vereinsbibliothek von Steinbach** (German Library Association of Steinbach) in 1923 and gave \$5 each into a fund which was then used to buy approximately 70 books.

Anyone in the community could lend books for a small fee and new volumes were purchased with this income. The books were kept in a private dwelling for the first while and then, for many years, in Rev. P. D. Friesen's watch repair shop on Main Street.

The library was in existence for 15 years,

from 1923 to 1938 and in this time gave much service and enjoyment to the members. Despite the fact that it was open to the community, however, only a comparatively small group of people used it and the books were, of course, quite selective. The library petered out when it did for a number of reasons. There weren't many new books being added anymore and some of the original members had read most of the volumes they wanted to read and lost interest.

Several efforts to obtain a proper public library in Steinbach were made in the 30-year period from 1938 - 68 but that nothing much ever came of these efforts never really surprised anyone. A few churches had their own libraries which were restricted to religious volumes and periodicals and a library which might introduce "worldly" influences into Steinbach did not meet with the approval or support of the Mennonite churches who generally (there were some exceptions) believed that higher education was unnecessary if not positively dangerous.

The fact that the people promoting the library were often transients who were not really part of the permanent community did not help the case either. It became clear that any successful movement to obtain a library would have to come from the local people themselves.

And the people were obviously in no hurry. Though there were a fair number of notable exceptions, the Mennonite people, as a whole had never taken a great interest in anything (aside from religion) that could not be measured in dollars or pounds and this was true in the wealthy Russian colonies as well as the two Mennonite reserves in Manitoba. Not only would the proponents of libraries have a difficult time but even the Mennonite periodicals and newspapers suffered because the readers would frequently exchange or borrow copies rather than buy their own.

Positive indication that the people wanted a library came after an organization called the Friends of the Library was formed for the purpose of obtaining a library in Steinbach (for the community and area) in September, 1969.

Despite successful petitions being presented to all three municipalities — Hanover, Village of Niverville and Town of Steinbach — four weeks ahead of the municipal elections

October 22, referendums were not held. It turned out that at least six weeks would be required for legal procedures preceding a referendum of this nature.

Discouraged but not defeated, the Friends of the Library regrouped and planned to be ready for the next fall, 1970. Again the petitions were obtained and presented to the three councils in what they were led to believe was plenty of time. In two municipalities — the R.M. of Hanover and Village of Niverville — it was again too late and by this time it became apparent that councils concerned were far from being in total agreement regarding the support of a regional library.

In Steinbach, the by-law was submitted to a vote October 28 and received overwhelming support with 534 voting for and 173 against.

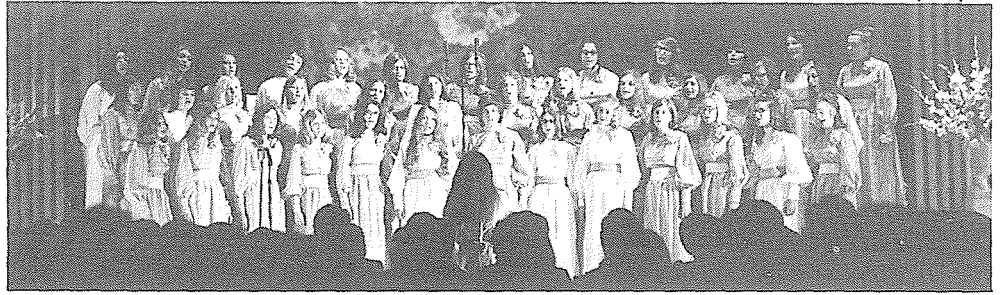
Although Steinbach had now approved the library, no action could be taken until at least one other municipality passed a similar referendum.

The Treble Teens— ambassadors of good will

Though the Treble Teens have been Steinbach's ambassadors of goodwill since the mid-1960's their contribution to the community in this and the cultural aspect has been overlooked by many.

Just as the car dealers of Steinbach put the community on the map as a good place to buy a car, so the Treble Teens choir has left many people across Canada linking the name of Steinbach with this highly professional group of girls.

The group was begun by Mrs Shirley Penner, daughter of Rev. and Mrs H. G. Rempel of Steinbach. Well trained in music in the U. S. she began giving voice lessons in Steinbach in 1963. The Treble Teens came about when the teenage girls taking these voice lessons were organized into a group by Mrs. Penner. Due to the high calibre instruction the choir built up a quick series of successes and won practically every competition they entered. Though the girls making up the choir did not remain



The 1971 Steinbach Treble Teens with director Mrs. Shirley Penner.

—Carillon News photo

constant, the Treble Teens grew more successful every year.

In 1967 the group topped all choirs at the provincial centenary festival at Brandon and became Manitoba's official representative choir for the national festival in Halifax.

In 1968 the Treble Teens won in two classes in the Manitoba Music Festival - intermediate folk song choirs and intermediate female voice choirs.

Highlight for the group came in 1969. After winning the top honors in the senior Grade A choirs competition at the Manitoba Music Festival, the choir was informed that it had been awarded the Birks Shield for outstanding choir singing. The Shield is awarded after the Manitoba Music Festival only if a choir gives an outstanding performance. It was last awarded in 1963.

1969 had another surprise for the Treble Teens. They received word April 1 that they were to receive an \$8,000 cultural exchange grant from Ottawa for the purpose of providing funds to travel to Joliette, Quebec and present a series of concerts in that province and also Ontario.

The exchange was a great success. After the Treble Teens visited Joliette, the choir from that city returned the visit to Steinbach in August. A capacity crowd of more than 900 jammed the Steinbach Collegiate auditorium and gave the visitors a big welcome. The choir, Les Chanteurs de la Place Bourget held the audience spellbound from beginning to end during their performance despite 90 degree temperatures in the collegiate auditorium.

The Mennonite Village Museum— a monument of the past for the future

While the Mennonites of the East Reserve have probably had the most interesting history and heritage of all the various ethnic groups in southeastern Manitoba, few Mennonites have ever come to realize or appreciate this fact.

At first the Mennonite way of life was passed on through the bonds of the church and the common language but both these lost their formerly-powerful grip as the people, over the years, became more fluent in English and traded their closely-knit farm villages for homesteads.

Slowly the Mennonites became more and more assimilated and less and less different. Partly because they were rather ill prepared for dealing with the world outside their closely-knit communities and taught few social graces, some came to believe that their Low German language and traditions were not sophisticated enough. In later years some of the less enlightened even came to believe that an English name was somehow more impressive and changed theirs in the hopes that this would somehow bring them the prestige and pride they felt their heritage had failed to give them.

Many were indifferent to their heritage and it was sometimes apparent that outsiders, even people of a different nationality, took a greater interest in the traditions and history of the Mennonites than they themselves.

One group that attempted in a small way to

preserve the history of the Mennonite people was the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. Chronically short of funds, this organization's main effort had been to publish a few booklets on Mennonite history.

Then, in the late 1950's, several factors helped to shake the Society into action which in turn resulted in the beginning of the Mennonite Village Museum located on PTH 12, 1½ miles north of Steinbach.

With the passing of time many old buildings of historical values were being moved to make way for progress and this "awakening" was particularly noticeable when the residence of the late G. G. Kornelsen, on North Main, was demolished. Some of the members of the Historical Society had hoped to preserve this building which was the last original settlers home in Steinbach but they were unable to do so because there were no funds available.

The demolition of this property in 1960 stirred the Society into action. A meeting was called and it was here that the idea of a Mennonite museum (as opposed to simply a local museum) was first introduced.

But fortunately, not all efforts to preserve the past shared the same fate as that of the Kornelsen home and this was due largely to the efforts of two men, John C. Reimer and J. J. Reimer.

John C. Reimer's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Reimer, were children when the first eighteen families came to Steinbach from Russia in 1874 and John W. Reimer was a teamster here

for many years, hauling freight from Winnipeg and Giroux to Steinbach.

After he turned twelve, John C. Reimer assisted his father on these trips, usually driving a second team. After receiving an education in the village school he became a teacher himself in 1917 and continued his education during his teaching years until he received his first class teacher's certificate. His last year as a teacher was in 1945 at the Ekron School near Steinbach; after this he took up farming.

As a teacher, Mr. Reimer had come to realize that history lessons could be made far more realistic to students if actual articles used by forefathers could be brought to the classroom. This is how, in the 1920's, Mr. Reimer began building a Mennonite museum. He kept many of the articles belonging to his own grandfather, Klaas Reimer and added to his collection when and where he could.

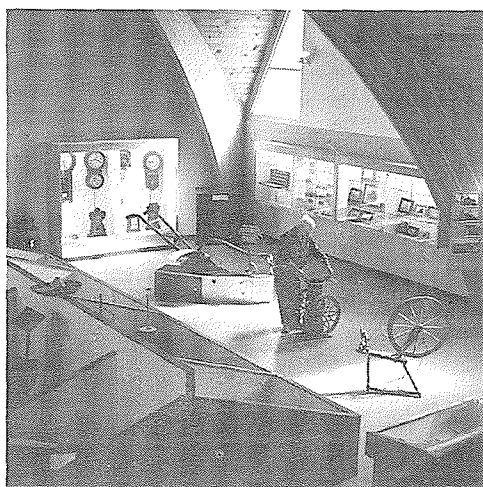
In 1950 Mr. Reimer discovered that his grandfather's original store which had been built in 1884 and was the first store building in Steinbach (though Mr. Reimer sold merchandise out of his house beginning in 1877) was on a Steinbach district farm serving as a barn.

Mr. Reimer undertook to buy this building and moved it to near the present Imperial Oil station site on Main Street west where it underwent alterations and was stocked with many pioneer items and antiques and shown to visitors upon request.

Though not a businessman, he became an indefatigable promoter of the museum over the years. By July, 1958 Mr. Reimer had succeeded in getting a few other people interested and reported on the little group's efforts to town council. He said that a small committee had been formed to press further for a museum somewhere in the Mennonite area. Since the committee was obviously without funds, it would be happy to take whatever might be offered in the way of suitable land or a set of original Mennonite buildings that could be preserved in order to start the museum.

Historical Society revived

It was at around this time as well that the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society was revived and organized and the Mennonite museum became one of the main objectives of the Society. Since the Mennonites, generally speak-



Curator John C. Reimer in the Mennonite Village Museum artifacts building.

ing, had been an agricultural people through the 500 years of their existence and lived in farm villages in the different countries, the directors of the society agreed that it would be appropriate that the museum building should be an authentic Mennonite house-barn.

Partly because the first Mennonites in Manitoba settled first on the East Reserve and partly because John C. Reimer had already collected numerous items here, it was decided to build the museum here.

After considerable deliberation by the directors as to the best location, a six-acre plot of land was purchased for \$3,000 one mile north of Steinbach on the P.A. Reimer farm in December, 1961. To further encourage the Society to build the museum at Steinbach, residents and businessmen made pledges of money to support the project. At this time the board of directors executive consisted of G. Lohrenz, chairman; Ted Friesen, Altona, vice-chairman; G. Enns, Gretna, secretary. Board members were: J. A. Toews, Winnipeg; P. J. B. Reimer, Rosenort; Jacob Rempel, Gretna; F. H. Zacharias, Plum Coulee; K. R. Barkman, Steinbach and John C. Reimer, Steinbach.

The pledges were called in March, 1962 and the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce appointed two men, Abe Kauenhoven and John Loewen, to represent the chamber on the board and work on the museum project. But by the summer of 1963 it became apparent that the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society was having difficulties in getting this project going because of the difficulties in getting the widespread members to attend regular meetings. As a result, the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce picked up the ball. It decided to organize a museum committee to be affiliated with the provincial organization but which would raise funds and direct the work of building the museum.

J. J. Reimer elected to head the project in 1963

J. J. Reimer, grandson of pioneer merchant Klaas Reimer and presently vice-president of Morgan-Nicholson Ltd., was elected to head the museum project.

In accepting the nomination as chairman for

this gigantic project, Mr. Reimer said: "I am interested in working on this committee in any capacity. I've grown up in the district and my grandfather was one of its first pioneers. I am interested in preserving some of our history and I've come to the stage where I have some time and money to spend."

The newly-elected committee chairman stipulated that he was serving on the understanding that the museum would not be merely a local Steinbach project but would develop as a Manitoba-wide undertaking and that it would represent Mennonites from every part of the province.

Others elected to comprise the working executive were: E. Derksen, secretary; John Schellenberg, treasurer; John C. Reimer, building; A. Kauenhoven and William Reimer, planning and grounds; A. A. Vogt and Bill Schellenberg, gathering historical data and material.

Following his election, Mr. Reimer went on a two-month holiday to see various museums in Ontario and the United States and as a result of what he learned in this trip decided that the museum project would have to be larger than originally planned.

It was on this basis that the project was launched anew. Plans were now to have the project consist of a modern artifacts building (rather than solely the original farm house and barn) together with an entire Mennonite village complex typifying such as were built following the 1874 settlement here and such as had been built before that on the steppes of Russia.

Estimated cost of the village was calculated at \$250,000 and Mr. Reimer hoped to raise the money in various ways. First of all, the Town of Steinbach had already adopted a resolution which would direct all of its centennial funds into the museum and the R.M. of Hanover also gave great support by contributing 55 per cent of the centennial grant funds plus \$16,000 through a special one-mill levy for four years.

Other money was to be obtained through donations of individuals and the whole community of Mennonites in Manitoba.

On March, 1965 the Mennonite Village Museum at Steinbach received the approval of the Manitoba government. The Hon. Maitland Steinkopf, chairman of the Manitoba Centennial Corporation told the Steinbach Chamber

of Commerce at an annual banquet that the project ranked first in centennial projects in Manitoba.

In July, 1965 the first sod was turned for the artifacts building. Representing the two largest bodies of Mennonites in Canada were Rev. Gerhard Lohrenz of Winnipeg for the Mennonite General Conference and Rev. H. A. Berg, also of Winnipeg, representing the Mennonite Brethren.

Rev. Lohrenz likened the museum to the monument built by the children of Israel to commemorate their crossing of the Jordan River. "Although our generation aspires to reach the moon," Rev. Lohrenz said, "we are not more clever nor more capable than our forefathers. We are merely profiting by their toil and efforts."

He traced briefly the history of the Mennonites from their origin in Holland to the present. "The museum commemorates our culture, which is an expression of our faith," Rev. Lohrenz said. "It is fitting in this age of materialism that we should here recall something more important than mere material achievement."

Rev. Berg said the museum project was one which would speak to generations to come. It would be a sacred reminder of the accomplishments of the past; it would underscore the distinctive traits of the Mennonite people and it would serve as a reminder to give thanks for the work of our forefathers, he said. He quoted the words of historian Arnold Toynbee:

"Not to know the past is to be an infant in the present."

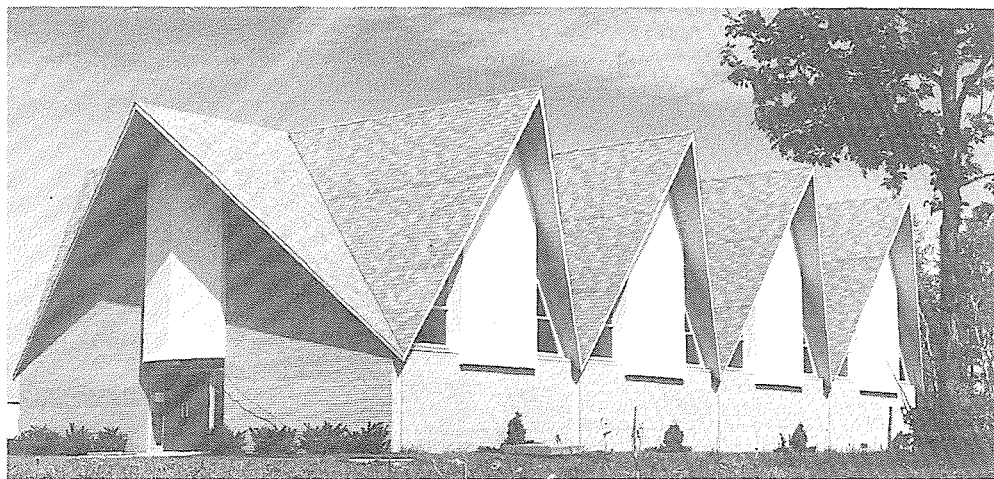
On September 3, 1967 Manitoba's Mennonite population put a solid seal of approval on their centennial project. Thousands attended the official opening of the Mennonite Village Museum.

This opening concluded the first phase of a project which envisioned the construction of a complete village including such things as a blacksmith shop, store and a grist mill similar to the one built in Steinbach in 1876. This was to be completed by the Mennonite centennial in 1974.

The project advanced further every year and thousands of tourists visited the grounds annually. In the last few years the annual "Pioneer Day" celebrations also drew great crowds despite the sometimes inclement weather conditions. The women's auxiliary was also formed at this time and greatly assisted the cause.

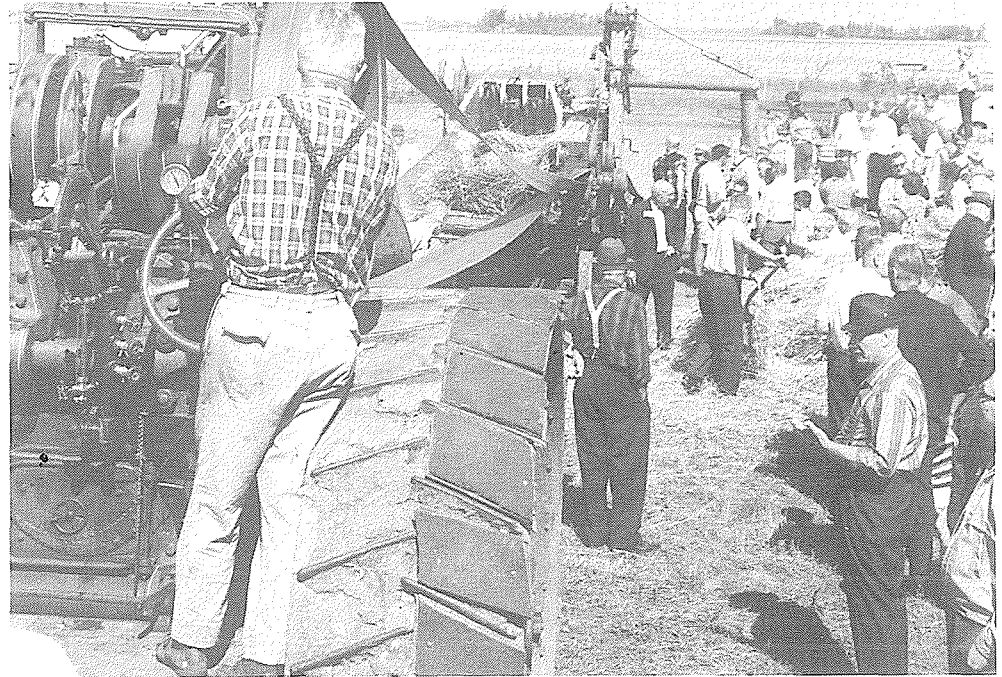
Though various buildings had already been added to the complex including a church and one-room school house, the greatest decision for the directors came about at a meeting July 25, 1970 when a replica windmill was okayed.

A building committee consisting of K. R. Barkman, H. W. Redekop, Gerhard Loewen, Eugene Derksen and J. J. Reimer was formed at the meeting and the extensive planning for this project got underway. By late August the committee had two Dutch authorities on windmills in Steinbach to plan the building of the



The Mennonite Village Museum artifacts building.

—Carillon News photo



Threshing at the Pioneer Day on the Mennonite Village Museum grounds in September, 1969.

—Carillon News photo

local windmill and the project was greatly encouraged by the announcement by Premier Schreyer that the provincial government was donating a further \$17,000. Actual construction was to begin in 1971.

The theatre

The history of Steinbach's first moving picture theatre is not a happy one. Built at the corner of Kroeker and Main in the fall of 1940, it was petitioned against by practically every church in the community and immediate surrounding area and just how it was even possible for someone to build a theatre in a community where probably over 90 per cent of the residents objected to movies on religious grounds, is hard to understand.

The town was not incorporated at this time and probably the strong objections to the theatre failed to come to anything because the protesters failed to present their petitions in the manner prescribed by the Municipal Act.

Owner of the theatre was F.W. Tornopolski and the first movie, believed shown in Jan-

uary, 1941, starred Gary Cooper and Joanne Crawford in "Today We Live." Though patronage was fair the owner of the theatre, perhaps feeling the cold shoulder he was receiving in the community, went to his garage one night, closed the door and started his car. And so the first chapter in the history of the theatre in Steinbach ended on a tragic note.

During the years 1943 to 1946 the theatre was run by John Vogt. The business was not as good as anticipated and when, following the war, real estate boomed, he was quick to sell to Gordon Mallard.

By 1946 more cars and better roads brought in an ever-growing number of customers and the theatre was filled on many nights. But taxes, at least in Mr. Mallard's opinion, were rising faster than the profits. He protested against what he termed "discriminating" taxes and the town by-law which forbade him to operate on certain Christian and church holidays. In 1956, when the new provincial assessment came out, coupled with the waterworks tax, Mr. Mallard did what he'd threatened to do for years—move out.

Mr. Mallard took his house and 40 x 80' thea-

tre out of town to Ste. Anne in October, 1956 and operated there until 1969 when the show hall burned to the ground.

Steinbach was without a theatre then for 12 years. On November, 1968, Ed Vogt, son of the second owner of the Playhouse Theatre, applied for and was granted a theatre building permit. The new owner advised the public that he would try and show decent films but the fact that considerable number of children gained entry into the theatre for restricted movies raised some concern in the community in 1970. No concerted effort to close the thea-

ter in the town was made, however, and the theatre did well, drawing clientele from a large surrounding area.

The first circus was just a bit too much

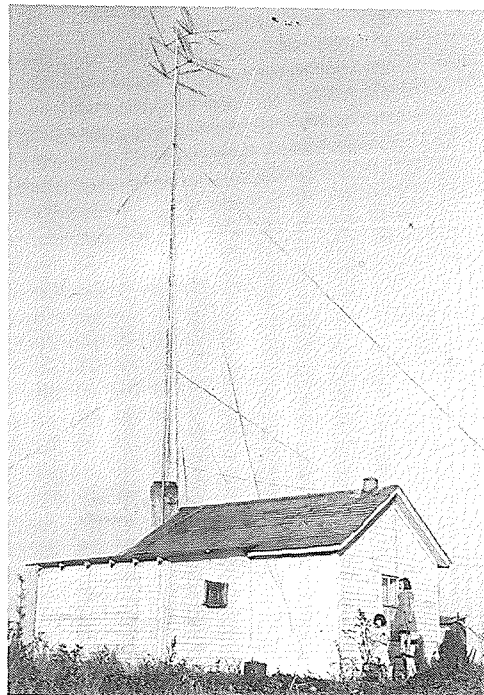
Many Giroux, Steinbach and surrounding area residents got their first look at a real circus in 1911 when the famous Ringling Brothers circus which was putting on its main show at Winnipeg sent a few carloads of acts and animals for a one-day stand at Giroux.

The people here had never seen a circus and ignorant as they were of the ways of the entertainment world, believed that there would be just animals and maybe a few acrobatic acts—pretty innocent stuff at any rate.

Giroux was in its heyday in those years and when the train arrived and the big steam wagon and elephants paraded majestically down the main street there were hundreds of Mennonites there who had come from miles around to see the show. Innocent enough, they'd come to see the animals but they got to see a little more. Hootchy-kootchy dancers and gamblers were there in abundance and the people received a lesson in "worldly" affairs that was to last them for many years.

It was nearly half a century before another circus was allowed into the area. In June, 1953 Wallace and Clark pulled into the bustling community of Steinbach and even though the bloodsweating hippopotamus failed to sweat blood and the herd of elephants had shrunk to only one, thousands came from far and near. And as far as the acts were concerned, no one was disappointed; at least the chamber of commerce had seen to it that there were no dancing girls or gamblers.

But in another aspect the crowd was not so happy and the oldtimers who still remembered the time they were "taken" at Giroux had justification for having said "I told you so." People just weren't used to the high-handed, hard-driving "business" methods used by a circus—any circus. An advertised price of \$1.50 seemed steep, but on a once-in-a-lifetime occasion even that was not too bad. But when they arrived, there were little extras. To see the ape that killed for love cost 25 cents more



The Tourist Hotel had the first television set in Steinbach but the first home to boast the familiar aerial was that of Peter W. Guenther, Home Street, in 1953. When Mr. Guenther first turned on his set (purchased from Penner Electric where he worked part-time) his small house could scarcely hold all the curious neighbours. The huge aerial was directed to Fargo, North Dakota, the nearest station. To the oldtimers this was a scientific miracle surpassing even the cream separator and self-propelled steam engine. CBW's television station in Winnipeg became operative May 31, 1954 and after this more and more people started buying sets.

—Carillon News photo

and to see the world's biggest rat was another quarter. Then there was the side show with all the animals, another 50 cents or 55 cents if the face looked right. "What's the extra nickel for?" one mama asked. "A service charge. Costs money to sell you this ticket, don't it?" the ticket-taker replied.

But the stories of the barkers were so interesting that many people just couldn't resist and after making the rounds, it had cost a pretty penny. Particularly when daddy had about four boys along who had to see it all.

It wasn't until September, 1960 that the second circus arrived in Steinbach. It was a one-

day stand put on by Carson and Barns and financially it was a flop.

It wasn't that the show was not good. As a matter of fact, some of the people said they were surprised at the quality of the acts. But it happened to be harvesting time and would take a lot more than the "real McCoy" who could crack a bull whip better than anyone else and a hundred and one other "greatest on earth" to lure the farmer from his combine or swather, or the housewife from her canning. There were those who said they had been to a circus seven years ago and still remembered all the gates they had to go through before they finally got a ringside seat.

13. Corduroy to pavement... the story of our roads and highways

The settlers' roads followed the Lake Agassiz beaches

The first roads in the East Reserve were not carefully planned thoroughfares that connected the settlements and allowed for a quick and easy flow of commerce.

The Reserve lay on what once was Lake Agassiz and the beaches and gravel ridges that the waters had gently built up over the years were used as roads by the settlers.

Perhaps the most notable of these ridge roads in the municipality was the one that started in Barkfield (Bergfeld) and ran through Grunthal and Schoensee to Steinbach.

There were other ridge roads as well and these served the communities remarkably well. For many years the only work done in the way of roadbuilding consisted of smoothing out the rough spots on these trails.

The necessity of a good road to Winnipeg became apparent, however, early in the history of the settlements. In 1898 the CN's main line was built past the northeastern corner of the Reserve. Records available do not make clear why the railway by-passed it but some people believe the CN was asked not to pass through Steinbach by business and church leaders who were afraid of the "worldly" traffic that would follow. Others, probably more credibly, say the railway passed the community because engineers wished to follow the shortest route east.

Whatever the reason, Steinbach's nearest rail connections lay in Giroux and La Broquerie where goods were teamed by horse and wagon.

If goods were taken direct to Winnipeg, a

trip with oxen took three days and with horses, two days.

As can be seen by the accompanying map there were several different routes that could be taken to Winnipeg from different points in the settlement.

The first route was the one from Grunthal north through Kleefeld and Kronsgart to Oak Island. The other was the one from Steinbach north to Blumenort and then northwest to Oak Island, near present-day Landmark.

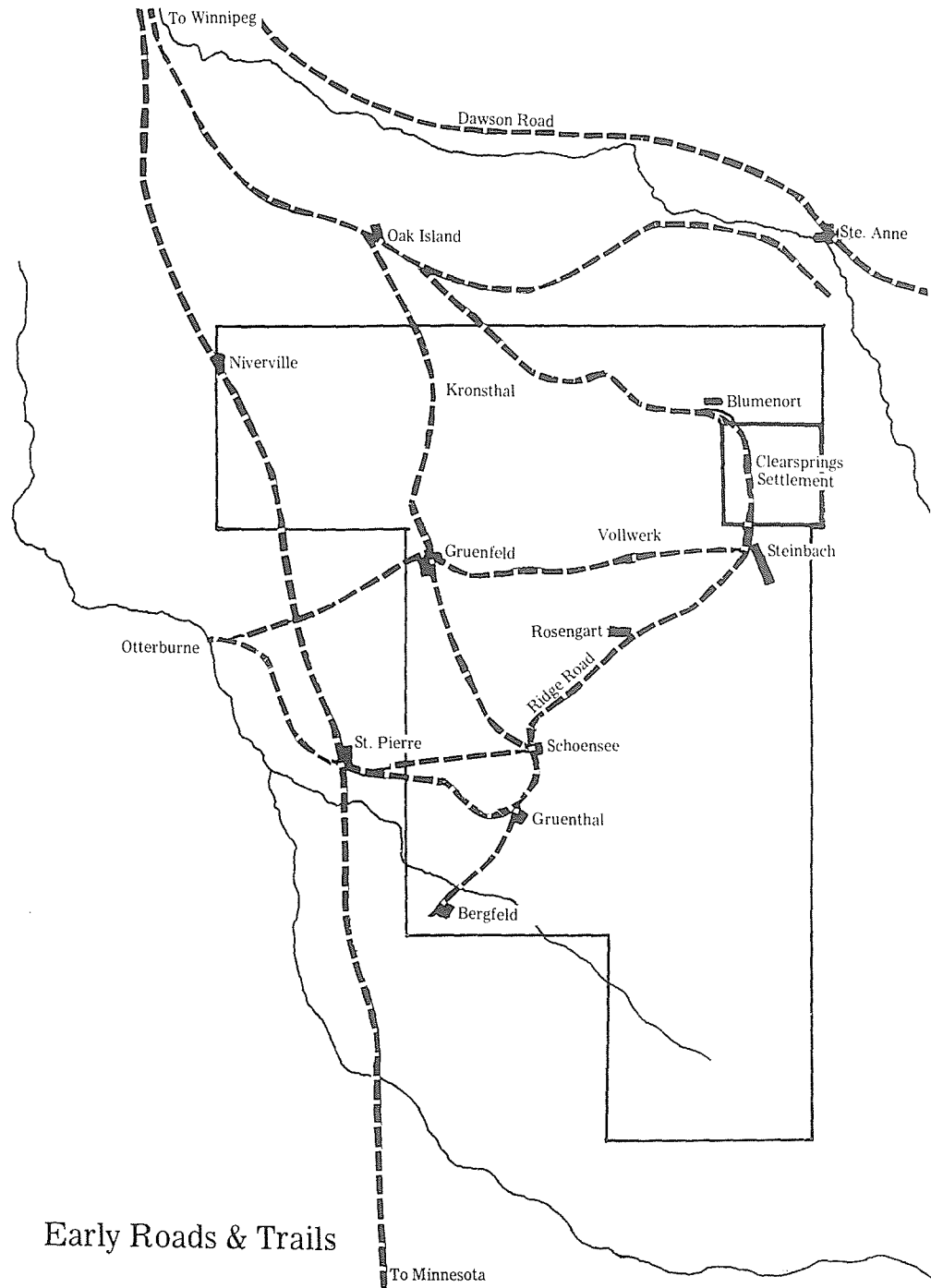
Both routes, in the early years, were a far cry from the modern paved highways that presently connect the communities and road-building was a dreadfully difficult task that was done with spade, plow and oxen. One pioneer recalled the following in the book *Gedenkfeier*:

"The road from Kronsthal to Grande Pointe was so bad, with so many swampy areas, that travellers always got stuck. As a result there soon developed areas where drivers would take their wagons off the trail to find firmer footing. Often the goods being carried by the wagons would have to be carried through the more difficult parts.

"Eventually, I think it was in 1881 or 1882, a number of people who used the road agreed to get together and repair it properly. Many came to help and I went there for several days myself during the two years." (Editor's Note: This was not a two-year project — work was done for several days or weeks during two summers.)

"The earth was loaded by shovel onto wagons and then dumped into the water to make dams. Road logs were brought from the farms by the workers and bridges were built."

When Abram S. Friesen of Steinbach hauled the equipment for his windmills from Winnipeg to Steinbach in 1878, we note the following



Early Roads & Trails

reference to roads in a report: "The task of transporting the equipment for the Steinbach mill from Winnipeg was met with many difficulties. There were, in those days, seven very wet spots between Steinbach and Winnipeg where it was common to get thoroughly stuck. The horses were then unhitched, the goods unloaded and taken to a dry place. Then after getting things mobile once again, the goods had to be replaced and the journey would continue to the next spot."

The road north of Grunthal was called *der*



The huge steam and later gas engines that replaced horse power were powerful but very heavy. This Rumley Oil Pull gas tractor was owned by Bill Cohoe, Giroux, who hired out, as was customary, to the municipality to do roadwork. (The municipality owned the grader). Mr Cohoe was concerned that this bridge between Sections 15 and 16, Township 7, Range 6 would be strong enough to carry the tractor but council assured him there would be no problem and he went ahead. Seen here surveying the results of their decision are some of the councillors, Nick Brandt and Johan P. Rempel and secretary-treasurer John D. Goossen. John F. Rempel is the engineer and John R. Funk the grader operator.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel



Demonstrating new road-making machinery in the RM of Hanover around 1930 on the road to Heuboden (Seaton) between Sec. 7 and 8, Township 7, Range 5. Jacob T. Loewen, Steinbach is operating the tractor and C. P. Rempel, Chortitz, the grader.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel

Winnipeg Weg (the Winnipeg Road) and was built with spades and shovels. Where possible, plows and earth scoops were used to build up the road bed. This road was started in the later 1870's.

According to Professor John Warkentin in his thesis **The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba**, the Manitoba government became perturbed about the poor conditions of the roads on the prairie following the wet years of 1876 to 1882 because their poor condition was beginning to retard settlement. As a result, the government adopted the policy of draining the land and leaving it to the municipalities to build the roads by statute labor on the road allowances.

This did not work too well because the government did not have enough money to construct satisfactory drains and statute labor proved to be too inefficient.

The East Reserve Mennonites, therefore, went about building roads in their own way and right up to 1900 did not build them on the road allowances but followed the high ridges.

Statute labor was no longer used in the R.M. of Hanover after 1914 because the council passed a by-law that taxes, rather than statute labour, be used.

In 1914 the municipality purchased a road grader and in 1929 a bulldozer was hired to build grades.

The route from Steinbach to Winnipeg in those days followed either the road allowances west to Ile des Chenes and Winnipeg or, after the Dawson Road was gravelled, north to Ste. Anne.

Efforts to get a better road connection between Steinbach and the Dawson Road at Ste. Anne began in 1929. The community of Steinbach was isolated through being snowed in for six weeks in February and March of 1930 and frustrations grew.

In spring council agreed to begin building a road to the northern part of the municipality where, hopefully, it would be met by a continued road to be built by the R.M. of Ste. Anne.

But the government had other ideas. It was planning the Piney Highway which was to run from Winnipeg to Ile des Chenes, straight east past Kleefeld through Steinbach, La Broquerie, Marchand and eventually to the United States.

Piney Highway built through R.M. of Hanover 1931-32

Construction of the Piney Highway through the R.M. of Hanover took place in 1931-32. Construction foreman for the municipality was K.R. Toews. Councillor in charge was M.M. Penner who vividly recalled in later years the poorly fed men and horses which worked on the tax relief project. Twenty-one miles were built in all and this was entirely done with horses and fresnoes. From 100 to 150 teams and 200 men worked on the two and one-half-year-long project.

The Piney Highway made dozens of headlines in later years when surrounding areas sought to have it completed through the Southeast to the U.S. border. Delegation after delegation motored to the legislature and after the Depression the aid of Steinbach was enlisted in the fight towards completion of the route to the U.S. border.

Song of the Piney Highway

Rally 'round friends;
While a tale we unfold.
It's not about wealth,
Either silver or gold.
It's not about food;
Either famine or feast.
But we'll sing of the road,
That serves the South-East.

Chorus: It's ribby and rocky;
Unsafe and unsound,
One half built of sand;
And the rest on soft ground.
In the summer, it's washboardy,
Dusty and rough.
And we're telling the world
It's not good enough!
We're telling the world,
It's not good enough!

When we walk in the town;
Every passery-by knows,
We're from the South-East,
By the mud on our clothes,
And the sweat on our brow;
But we're changing all that,
And we're changing it now.

Chorus:

Politicians take note,
Of the taxes we've paid;
Of the wheat we've grown,
And the cheese that we've made.
We're demanding our rights,
And not asking a boon.
We want a good highway,
And we want it right soon.

Chorus:

It's surfaced with curses
And watered by tears
From the toil and the pain
Of the last 20 years
The mud holes get thicker
The travel gets less
We can assure you
It's a pretty grim mess.

By N. G. Neer, in the *Carillon News*

May be sung to the tune of
"The Strawberry Roan"

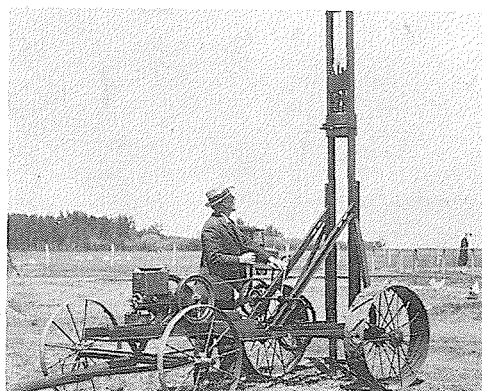
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In 1951 all that portion of the highway east of Steinbach down to Marchand was taken over by the provincial government. The 13 miles from the St. Pierre corner to Steinbach remained a one-third municipal responsibility.

This 13-mile section of road was pounded to pieces in 1955 and 1956 when it became the main road for the heavy trucks paving both No. 59 and 12. As a result, a delegation urged rebuilding. The contract for this was awarded June 3, 1958 and the department of highways then announced that this road was officially part of the province's trunk system and would be called Highway No. 52.

P.T.H. 12 was a trail until 1949

Prior to the building of the Piney Highway (now Highway 52) Steinbach residents, especially businessmen who wanted to get to Ste. Anne where the railway, health unit and court house facilities were located, had two choices. They could go the long way around via Winnipeg which meant 68 miles one way,



The RM of Hanover's first power pile driver was built by councillor John P. Rempel. It was used only for small bridges.

—photo courtesy Jac. P. Rempel

or they could take their chances on the 13-mile trail that connected the two communities.

Very few people were interested in the long way around so the trail north of Steinbach began to carry more and more traffic as the community grew. As vehicular traffic increased and the need for the transfers to get through daily became greater, two enterprising Steinbach businessmen, C. T. and J. T. Loewen, helped keep the road passable. The municipality had no snow-plowing equipment in these years and consequently the two men built a plow and cleared the way. Truck and car owners paid a toll to defray expenses but because a toll was illegal on the "King's" highway, the Loewen's made arrangements to use the farmers' land alongside the road.

The toll gate was operated until 1936.

The construction of a Steinbach-St. Anne road was advocated as early as 1928 when the Dawson Road was gravelled to Ste. Anne but this trail didn't become a road until 1949. In 1948 the government announced its biggest road building program in history and included was \$140,000 for grading, gravelling and bridges on the Steinbach-St. Anne road. This stretch of highway was surface-treated in 1952 and paved in 1955.

But the P. T. H. 12 did not stop at Steinbach in 1949. It continued, bit by bit, over the years on its way to Piney.

In most places, probably, it followed the road that had been chopped through the wilderness from Steinbach to Zhoda in 1938.

At that time, the R. M. of Hanover and Steinbach businessmen assisted by a \$250 government grant and the assistance of a bulldozer and pushgrader owned by the Manitoba Dairy Farms, laid an 11 mile road. Owing to the swampy ground in places, trees had to be cut and a "corduroy" laid. This was covered with dirt and gravel.

On Wednesday, July 6, 1949, Stratton Engineering began work on the same road one mile south of Steinbach. The contract was for 10 miles, to the Sarto corner.

The work bogged down many times in the swamps over the next few years but the lack of roads had hampered the Southeast and the R. M. of Hanover for over half a century and now enthusiasm was building to get the road finished.

In 1954 Highway 12 from Ste. Anne to Piney was officially completed. The new road opened up a whole new trading area to Steinbach and was a monument to men like Armour MacKay, road chairman of the Eastern Manitoba Development Board and Hon. Ed Prefontaine, M.L.A.

P. T. H. 12 was paved right down to Piney in 1958.

Highway 205

The Sarto-Grunthal-St. Pierre road was another major artery in the southern part of the municipality which brought delegations to the Manitoba legislature over the years.

After many years of travel on rough roads, the Sarto-Grunthal-St. Pierre Highway was built to P. T. H. standards at a cost of \$200,000. This was of greatest importance to Grunthal.

P. R. 205 received hardsurfacing from from Grunthal to St. Pierre in 1967 and from Grunthal to P. T. H. 12 in 1969.

Other roads

Many other important roads were built in the municipality, especially after the war, but really bad conditions remained in many of the southern parts.

The following report from a correspondent in the May 8, 1964 issue of the *Carillon News* dramatizes the point:



Building PTH 12 south of Steinbach was a roadbuilders' nightmare. This picture was taken around 1952 some 13 miles south of Steinbach and shows the type of swamp upon which much of the highway was built.

—Carillon News photo



The only time a premier and five cabinet ministers have been in Steinbach at the same time was in June or July 1955 when these visitors and others stopped in Steinbach prior to making a two-day trip to Sprague, Roseau and Warroad to determine the importance of building PTH 12 from the Vita corner to the U. S. border. Left to right are the Hon. Mr. Turner, a minister in the provincial government; Edmond Prefontaine, MLA for Carillon; Premier D. L. Campbell; Mayor K. R. Barkman, the Hon. Mr. Bell, minister of agriculture; Jack Wade, Lac du Bonnet; Reeve J. R. Barkman, RM of Hanover; the Hon. Mr. Greenly, deputy premier.

—Carillon News photo

Pansy-Barkfield roads faded away after rains

During the past two weeks our roads, or lack of them, has been the biggest subject of discussion in the Pansy-Barkfield district. But talk as we will, we still don't know where all the water and mud comes from.

One half of Sarto is full of water: John Smuk is making it from house to barn with rubber hip waders. In places, the big ditch on the Sarto road is overflowing onto the land.

When funeral services were held for Pete Minski at Pansy, a tractor was engaged to pull cars through the holes in order that people could attend the funeral.

Chornoboy's Transfer and Pete Martens, who

haul the milk from these parts, are using teams and tractors to bring the milk to a solid road where it is reloaded onto trucks. We don't talk much about trucker's profits now.

The mail, too, comes by tractor to Trentham, Pansy and Barkfield. But as the roads get softer we can even see the occasional tractor mired down in the mud. One chap, a trucker by trade, got disgusted with the whole situation. He left his truck on the yard and took a job with a transport company on a Winnipeg-Windsor run. I think Abe Funk will find the change from bottomless mud to hard concrete pavement most gratifying.

Several of us broke transmissions on our cars. Mine was in a mud hole and it wouldn't come out backwards or forward, so it was finally pushed out sideways and repairs had to be made right there.

The reeve and several councillors from De-Salaberry are coming out to look at the situation. Local tractor owners will take them around.

The situation has even affected our schools. Lister School has been closed down for two weeks to await sunshine, warm winds and a grader. None of the kids could make it.

From oxen to horses to cars

Transportation, in the early years, was slow, even in the community that was later to become the automobile city of Manitoba. The roads were only trails and the oxen were very slow, plodding creatures. The patience of some of the early settlers who had owned fine horses in Russia was especially tried by these animals. One of these men was Gerhard Schellenberg, grandfather of Jacob R. Schellenberg. He had bought a team of oxen in Winnipeg and as the oxen were only used to English commands which were strange to Mr. Schellenberg, he had carefully written "Whoa" and "Giddyap" in his notebook.

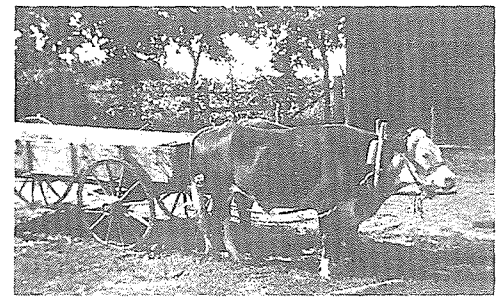
While on his way home to the Reserve, the tired oxen saw a waterhole a distance to the side of the road. The thirsty team branched off the main road toward the hole.

Mr. Schellenberg was unable to stop the team



Martin K. Friesen of Steinbach who was 90 years on March 3, 1971, can still remember the arduous journeys to Winnipeg with oxen in the 1880's. In those days a trip to Winnipeg would take three days. One day would be required to travel there, another day would be needed for business and shopping and the third day would be spent in returning home. Mr. Friesen can recall watching over the oxen near what is today Winnipeg's Main Street. In 1900 Mr. Friesen went to Winnipeg by bicycle in six hours.

—Derksen Printers photo



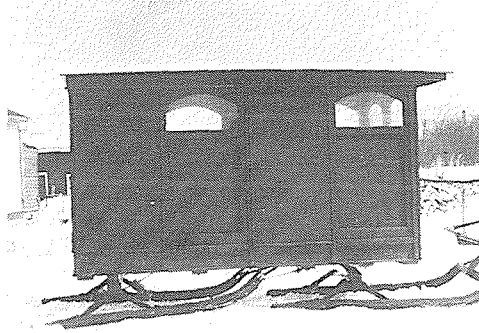
Oxen were used to break up the land homesteaded by the early settlers but by the early 1900's most of the teams had been replaced by either horses or tractors. This picture was taken in front of Kreutzer's Blacksmith Shop in 1909 and the team of oxen are probably one of the last to be used in the Steinbach area.

—photo courtesy William Laing



This Kleefeld couple with ox and wagon was photographed in 1910 at Niverville. The wooden wheels were probably taken from a hay rake.

—photo courtesy Peter T. Wiens



This sleigh and some 200 others like it were built by Plett Bros. in the years 1917 to 1941. Completely manufactured at the Plett's Blumenort factory, these sleighs sold for up to \$163 and a selective customer had up to 32 different options. Complete with upholstered seats, they came in the four-door (as above) and two-door models and were heated with charcoal foot warmers. The company that built these sleighs was founded by Cornelius R. Plett. He was later joined in business by his brothers, Henry R. Plett and Peter R. Plett. The firm was known as Plett Bros. from 1916-48 and Plett & Co. from 1948-56. The company employed up to 21 workers at one time and built and manufactured various items including cheese factory equipment (vats, cheese presses, boxes), chick brooders, wheel barrows and barn door latches.

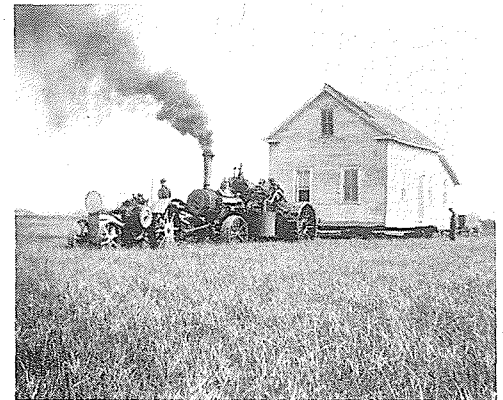
—photo courtesy Miss Marie Shilstra

because he had forgotten the words and by the time he found what to say in his notebook, the oxen were deep down in the soft mud and it took the greatest effort to get them back up again.



This livery and feed barn was built by K. R. Toews next to the hotel and stood where the Steinbach Fabric Centre is today. Mr Toews met the trains at Giroux with his wagons every day. The building to the right of the barn was a sample room where salesmen from the big cities like Toronto and Montreal could show their goods to the local merchants who would then place their orders a year in advance. Local boys would look through the windows and marvel at the wonderful things some people with money could buy.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther

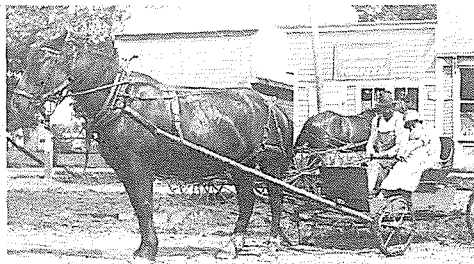


The residence of Aeltester (Bishop) Johann Dueck of the Chortitzer Gemeinde (congregation) at Shoensee was sold in 1927 to the National Trust and moved to Silberfeld. This log building was moved by Jacob T. Loewen, Steinbach. Because the sharp corner and bridge at the Kleefeld corner couldn't be negotiated, the building was moved through the Kleefeld creek on planks. The Titan was used to help guide the steamer through the marsh because the great weight of the steamer plus the load it was pulling lifted the front wheels up a bit and made them less effective for steering. The Titan belonged to David Hiebert, Chortitz and was driven by Henry Hiebert. Peter Koop is running the 80 h.p. Case steamer.

—photo courtesy Jac P. Rempel



An unidentified man with a smart team and buggy.



The most varied types of transportation were built in the Depression years. Old, broken down implements provided the wheels and the rest looks as though it came from a buggy. This was taken on Main Street, Steinbach in the 1930's.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio



Mr and Mrs William T. Toews and Mr and Mrs P. S. Guenther and family returning home from a Sunday afternoon visit in the country on their Bennett wagon. This was in 1942.

—photo courtesy P. S. Guenther

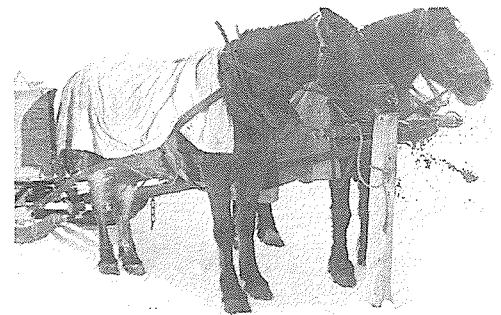
Before the railroad was built to the east of Steinbach, freight was being hauled from Winnipeg and Niverville. The best protection from the weather in those days was in a covered wagon that resembled the prairie schooner used by the settlers in the American West.

As soon as the settlers could afford it, the oxen were replaced by horses.

Of greatest interest to the schoolboys was the

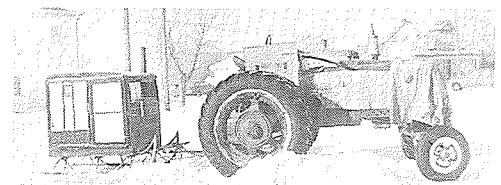
annual arrival of a herd of wild horses from the Western plains. A corral was erected in Steinbach by Peter Toews, commonly known as "Smith" Toews, and this was where those farmers of the community and district that were in need of horses, also local horse traders, gathered to buy and dicker. Many a thrilling sight was witnessed by the youngsters when the roping of the wild, frightened animals began. Horsemen were always present who, for a nominal charge, hitched a wild horse with a tame one for a first ride on a big farm wagon.

Before 1895, the broncos were corralled at A. W. Reimer's.



A very common sight up to the 1950's. Farmers coming to town would hitch their horses and then throw blankets on them to keep them warm while they went about their business. In the sub-zero weather, icicles would form on the hair around the horses' mouths. The type of sleigh seen here was typical and every farmer had one.

—Carillon News photo



Sometimes, nature forced people to return to the older, surer methods of transportation. When a snowstorm blocked the country roads and farmers had to get to town to bring their children to school or buy goods, the horse and sleigh would often be used. And if the horse had already been replaced by a tractor, as was the case here, that would do just as well. This photo was taken in front of Derksen Printers around 1954.

—Carillon News photo

After the first few years following the arrival of the settlers, buggies came into greater use, at least for within and around the community where the roads were sounder.

As related in the chapter on the automobile industry, the first factory-built cars made their appearance around 1912 and these "gas buggies" completely revolutionized travel.

* * * *

In contrast to the afore-mentioned story on ox-locomotion, there is another that was related by John B. Toews, pioneer, on his 87th birthday many years ago.

On one of their trips to Winnipeg with their automobile in the early days one of Mr. Toews' sons was at the wheel and as they were all not too well acquainted with the city and stop signs were few and far between, they relied on a booklet they had received from city authorities on the rules and regulations of lawful driving on the main thoroughfares. They did alright, too, until Mr. Toews' son made a turn west to Portage from Main south without consulting the safety booklet and a traffic officer stopped them and pulled them over to the curb.

After some difficulty in explaining where they were from and finally satisfying the policeman on that point, the policeman found that the driver had no driver's licence and ordered the whole party to police headquarters. Here, the officer in charge lectured long on the laws that governed the motorist but finally decided to let them go without paying any fine, just insisting that the driver immediately purchase a licence.

Here Mr. Toews had to do some fast thinking and explained to the officer that since it was late in fall they would not be using the car much longer as there were no roads in winter to travel on. He finally got off with a stern warning after explaining that it was not really his fault that all his boys wanted to drive the car and it was too costly for him to purchase that many licences.

K. R. Toews carried the mail and passengers

Playing a key role in the field of transportation in Steinbach and area following the turn of the century was K. R. Toews who carried mail and passengers to various points.

His most oft-travelled route went from Steinbach to Giroux. For some years he was also the mail carrier bringing the mail from the Giroux station to Steinbach. Since he was in His Majesty's Service, a toot from his car horn would be enough to bring the other vehicles or whatever, over to the side of the road.

Mr. Toews frequently carried passengers on his mail route. He'd be at the Giroux station by 7 a.m. to catch the train for his passengers wishing to go to Winnipeg and be back at 7 p.m. to meet those returning.

The price for a trip to Giroux from Steinbach was 50¢ one way per person unless you were a travelling salesman in which case you paid double. A special trip to Giroux cost \$2.

In the 1920's a car trip to Giroux from Steinbach took around 1¼ hours and a trip to St. Pierre, about three hours. The roads in these days were frequently next to impassable in summer and in winter there were the blizzards to contend with.

The Giroux-Steinbach winter road, usually travelled by horse and sled, went one mile south of Giroux and then angled off through the bush to Steinbach. The passengers were wrapped in fur robes and sometimes all three seats (three people per seat) were occupied. In those days there was no stigma about wearing long underwear.

Every driver, it is said, could tell how cold it was, within a few degrees, by listening to the sound the sleigh runners made on the snow.

Penner's Transfer started in 1923

Trucking became ever more important to the communities in the Reserve in the 1920's and '30's. Penner's Transfer started in 1923 and a regular bus service was run by K. R. Toews in the 1930's. In the spring of 1934 Mr. Toews traded off his long-serving Ford and bought a blue Chevrolet. His daily bus schedule in April 1934 was: La Broquerie - 7:00 a.m.; Steinbach - 7:15 a.m.; Giroux - 7:35; Ste. Anne - 7:50; Lorette - 8:20; Winnipeg - 9:00 a.m.

In the winter of 1934 Steinbach was snowed in for some time and J. R. Friesen's snowmobile took passengers to Ste. Anne where the bus took them to Winnipeg. Steinbach transfers were stationed at Ste. Anne and brought goods to

Steinbach by sleigh. Penner's Transfer had a huge five foot by fourteen foot box sleigh which went to Ste. Anne in the morning and returned in the afternoon.

In 1938 J. T. Loewen and P. D. Reimer operated a 24-hour snowplane service.

In 1930, the Royal Transportation Co., Winnipeg, began a daily bus service to Steinbach.

Driver on the Steinbach route was Johnny B. Toews, son of the aforementioned K. R. Toews. "Johnny" drove for Royal Transportation only a year and a half when the company decided to go out of the bus business. He then bought the bus and charter, operated it as "The Silver Arrow" until 1938, when he sold out to Grey Goose Ltd., which operates the franchise till this day.

14. The Mennonites had their own fire insurance

As far back as 300 years ago, when the Mennonites were farmers in Prussia, they realized that some sort of protection against the devastating losses of fire was necessary.

As a result, gradually, a unique form of mutual insurance developed with each village and colony electing insurance officers.

The German name for this insurance for three whole centuries was **Branntordnung** which means arrangement for helping people who have suffered losses through fire.

Premiums were collected only when a loss occurred and the whole plan operated on a cost-plus basis with all officials donating their time. It was so cheap that even the poorest settler could afford this vital protection.

(There was also a church-directed orphan and widow organization called **Waisenamt** which was run on the same principle as today's trust companies with the difference being that all work was done without remuneration or profit.)

When the Mennonites began emigrating to Canada, beginning in 1874, they brought their form of fire insurance with them and the system worked as well here as it had in Russia and Prussia.

There were several different organizations serving different groups of Mennonites in the province. All were called **Branntordnung** until 1940. Then, government regulations forced all insurance companies to register under English names and also regularize their activities.

As a result, Mennonites of the Bergthaler persuasion called their insurance company the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Co. and the Chortitzer Mennonites called theirs the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co.

A third group, Canadian Mennonite Insurance, came into being in 1923 because the older companies could not see their way clear to

underwrite fire insurance for the growing business community but restricted their policies to private dwelling places only.

Rather than insure with large outside firms, such well-known Mennonite businessmen as C.T. Loewen, M. M. Penner and D. W. Friesen (Altona) got together and organized their own Mennonite company.

Some years later the company decided to include Hutterite colonies in the group eligible for insurance. In 1964 a series of very heavy fire losses in some of the colonies lowered the firm's reserves to the point where the company could not continue in business without assessing premiums up beyond the competitive level.

As a result, the Canadian Mennonite Insurance Company, a strong force in the financial progress of Mennonite businessmen in southern and eastern Manitoba for half a century, dissolved in January, 1965 and some \$1½ million in premiums and \$17,000 in assets were turned over to the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Co.

Both the Red River Valley Mutual and the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual companies enjoyed increased growth in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's and are still in business, though presently carrying more than just fire insurance.

The Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Co. has a colorful local history dating back to 1874 when the **Branntaeltester** (head of the fire insurance group) was Jacob Stoesz. He held office until 1891 when he was replaced by Heinrich Harder. The office of **Branntaeltester** existed right up to 1940 at which time the invocation of the Manitoba Insurance Act replaced that office with a more formal slate of officers.

The **Branntaeltester** was responsible for the duties later performed by a board of directors and manager-secretary-treasurer.

Whereas most insurance companies employed complicated computation and actuarial departments to figure out their rates, the Mennonite Mutual operated from generation to generation on a system that was almost the exact opposite. When a home in a village settlement or district covered by the insurance arrangement burnt down, the local **Branntschulze** or agent merely estimated the value of the building and assessed all the villages which were members of the insurance arrangement enough money to cover two thirds of the cost of the burnt property.

Neither the local agent, one of whom lived in each Mennonite village, nor the **Branntaelter** who headed the whole organization, received any wages. The agents worked solely for brotherly love and the head man received a token payment which varied from 35 cents per member in one year to an outright present of \$25 per year on at least one other annual occasion.

Steinbach citizens showed early interest in fire prevention

The early Mennonite pioneers had never heard of Fire Prevention Week. Their children had never had fire drills in school. But they were well acquainted with the havoc fire could cause and in their first year of settlement in 1874 the pioneers of Steinbach already had their own fire prevention code.

The rules, according to the by-laws of the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co., stated that "every resident must have one long ladder in good repair and one fire hook." It was also demanded that, should anyone spot a fire, he should raise the alarm immediately and that every able-bodied man come immediately to the fire with hook, ladder and pails if possible and do everything in his power to help extinguish the blaze.

Mutually it was agreed that the **Oberschulz** (mayor or reeve) was automatically in charge of the situation. His orders had to be followed and no one could leave the scene of the fire until given permission to do so.

It was only in more recent years, probably in the 1940's, that the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual started writing risks if the applicant didn't have the ladder and firehook. The fire-

hook was an implement used to push over burning walls and consisted of a long, thin tamarac pole with an iron hook at the end. Up to 1938 Steinbach carpenter Julius Block still had a supply of these hooks on hand in his woodwork shop.

But long before the firehook was outmoded, Steinbach ratepayers already sought better fire protection. In 1920, the year that the village elected its first village board, two chemical fire engines were bought. One was stationed at J. R. Friesen's Garage, the other at K. R. Barkman's.

Only two years later the citizens decided that water should be made more readily available for fighting fires. The minutes of the council meeting of September 20, 1920, show that it was decided that three wells on Main St., not less than eight feet in diameter, be constructed. A fire pump was purchased from the P. T. Barkman firm for \$200, to be paid from the 1921 levy without interest. Thus, the first fire-fighting set-up, based along lines similar to today's came into being in a village that had less than 500 people.

Rural areas had little protection

Before the first pumpers there were just bucket brigades and while these saved many buildings in the communities, the rural areas were practically helpless in the case of a fire.

In those days, in the winter, when the mercury slid down to 30 or 40 degrees below zero and the stove pipes glowed red, thoughts of fire came naturally to a family man with half-a-dozen children asleep upstairs.

Just one strong gust of wind, pulling the sparks out of the pipes, could be enough. The dry shingles could catch hold and the shavings underneath would feed the flames right into the walls. Sometimes there was barely enough time to wake the family and watch years of work go up in smoke.

Even after the first decrepit army crash trucks or pumpers rolled onto the scene and larger towns like Steinbach, Grunthal and Niverville began receiving a bit better fire protection, the rural areas were still very poorly protected.

There were just too many odds against a fire truck and volunteers ever reaching a farm in time. First of all, the men in charge of operating a truck had to be roused and gathered. This involved numerous phone calls at a time when not everyone had a phone. Then the truck had to be started and gotten to the scene of the fire. In sub-zero weather, with clogged or heavy roads, there were terrific odds against a fire brigade arriving in time to save anything and even if it did arrive in time the few hundred gallons of water the pumper carried was often insufficient.

Over the years, the villages and municipalities saw the need for better equipment and found the funds to pay for it. Slowly the old relics that had operated on a prayer and a kick were replaced with closer to the real thing. Alarm systems, usually sirens, were set up and volunteer firemen, who held real drills, were obtained.

For the town of Steinbach, a new era in fire-fighting began with the coming of waterworks

in 1956. The new era marked an end to the efforts of the old bucket brigade which on many an occasion fought valiantly against great odds to save a home or business.

Although no record was kept of the many buildings destroyed by fire prior to the days of proper equipment and trained firemen, many in Steinbach can still remember the Schwarz store fire in 1936 or '37. Although the building was lost, hard work by volunteers saved an adjoining building only a few feet away. Without the diligent work of the volunteers, the whole block could have gone. Similarly, there was a fire in 1943 that destroyed the P.B. Reimer store and Steinbach Lumber Yards—a blaze so hot that windows cracked across the street. Yet, volunteers confined the blaze to the two buildings.

On two occasions at least, the brigade, with the aid of volunteers, saved the C.T. Loewen and Sons factory where an adequate water supply was at hand.



The bucket brigade served Steinbach until 1956 when water and sewer was installed. Many businesses, including C. T. Loewen's factory, were saved by the bucket brigade and daring feats by volunteers were a part of many a blaze. Judging by the relaxed manner of these fire fighters this couldn't have been a very difficult fire to control.

No deaths due to fire in Steinbach

Although there have never been any deaths due to fire right in the village or town of Steinbach (approximately seven are recorded in the RM of Hanover) there were several instances in recent times where the occupants of burning buildings narrowly escaped death.

In March, 1956 an early Monday morning fire flashed though the Steinbach Dry Cleaning plant. Mr and Mrs Emil Senkiw, owners of the business, escaped through a window in their basement living quarters while the fire raged overhead. They awoke at around 3 a.m. to find their room full of smoke. Mr Senkiw smashed a window and both escaped clad only in night clothes.

Four years later, in mid-April, 1960, four tenants living on the second floor of the Evangel Book Shop escaped to safety by climbing out the top storey windows when the half-century old building caught fire.

Mr and Mrs Gordon Plett escaped through the back window onto the coal shed roof from which it was a short hop to the ground. Mr and Mrs Glenn Wiens escaped through the front window, dropping ten feet to the sidewalk below.

Biggest fires 1960-70

Though there were countless fires in the municipality and town of Steinbach over the years, the biggest fires occurred in the last decade, 1960-70.

1960 was probably the most memorable to most Steinbach residents because on Monday afternoon, March 7, the old Evangelical Mennonite Church, a building that had played a significant role in the growth of Steinbach and its people, fell victim to fire.

While a crowd that represented almost half the population of the town looked on and while the regular fire brigade aided by dozens of willing volunteers battled the flames valiantly, the historic building slowly succumbed.

Despite the enormous volume of 175,000 gallons (or 875 tons) of water which the local firemen, aided by a truck from St. Vital fire brigade hurled at the advancing blaze, the flames raced quickly up inside the building, exploding in a veritable inferno through the



The old Evangelical Mennonite Church, built in 1911, succumbed to fire March 7, 1960. The new \$130,000 church being built next to it, at right, was saved. The loss of the building was an historical event because it was the worshipping place of the town's oldest congregation.

—Carillon News photo

roof about an hour after the fire was first noticed.

The old tinder-dry wooden building burnt with explosive fury. Only the tremendous volume of water power available from the town's waterworks system, kept it sufficiently under control to save the new adjoining \$130,000 church and perhaps other neighboring buildings which could conceivably have ignited had the heat been great enough. As it was, quite a number of home and business owners located downwind from the fire kept vigil on their rooftops with brooms and only averted further disasters by sweeping blazing pieces of shingles off as soon as they alighted.

Although the worst of the fire had burnt itself out by 9 p.m., firefighters and volunteers working in shifts kept vigil on the burning wreckage right through the night and a good part of Tuesday. The object was to allow the wreckage to burn itself up slowly so as not to endanger the adjoining building.

At the height of the fire a bucket brigade helped to keep the roof of the new church soaking wet as protection against the pieces of burning debris which the wind kept blowing across the small space that separated the two buildings.

The building which the fire destroyed had stood on its site since it was built in 1911 under the supervision of the late Abram Penner of Blumenort. Chief carpenter on the job was the late Michael Weiss. Later additions of an entrance foyer in 1942 and a large Sunday School addition in 1956 had increased the value of the building to somewhere between \$30,000 and \$40,000. Insurance to the amount of \$30,000 was carried. Burnt with the building were a number of good musical instruments including four organs, two of them portables, and two house organs plus a library of about 300-400 books.

Long known by local people simply as the "South End Church", the official name was always the **Kleine Gemeinde** church up until 1952 when it was officially changed to Evangelical Mennonite Church. But for the new auditorium just opened for occupation the previous April and not yet completely finished, the congregation would now have been without a place of worship. The loss of the building was an historical event nonetheless because it was the worshipping place of the

town's oldest congregation and all of the town's original founding fathers belonged to this church group.

The blaze rated as one of the largest in the town's history and the largest since the Steinbach Lumber Yard and P. B. Reimer and Sons store burned in December, 1943.

Though fire gutted the Steinbach Curling Rink the same year, in August, 1960, and a plumbing accident started a \$10,000 fire at the remodelled Bethesda Hospital building (now Extended Care Unit) in 1964, the next major conflagration occurred in November, 1966 when a spectacular and intensely hot fire quickly destroyed the Steinbach Feed Service Mill.

At this fire, in 1966, members of the fire brigade thought that they might be able to contain the fire in the ground level of the building but minutes later a huge dust explosion inside the building hurled fire into every corner of the mill and lifted the roof off the building.

Along with the fire brigade, other protective measures were put into effect. John Vogt, town council member of the Emergency Measures Organization, phoned people to watch their Main Street properties.

Burning embers floated as far as No. 12 highway and businessmen set up guards on rooftops and yards to watch for possible fire

outbreaks. Several fires of this nature broke out among the piles of lumber at Steinbach Lumber Yards.

These were promptly extinguished but the biggest help in preventing a spread in the blaze had been provided by Mother Nature on the previous night in the form of a three-inch blanket of snow.

All firemen from both town and municipality of Hanover took part in the big battle. They were assisted also, by ex-firemen, who came to give a hand. The heat was so intense that water from all the hoses seemed to have little effect and some firemen had blisters on helmets and protectors.

The firemen managed to save the nearby feed mill office. The heat blew out the windows on the side facing the feed mill and even though water was continually being sprayed on the wall, the doors occasionally exploded into fire.

The Steinbach Feed Service Mill was part of the Friendly Family Farms complex, used exclusively to provide feed for member farms.

An average of 100 tons of feed was processed in the plant daily. Just before the fire, extensive renovations had been made in the mill and a great deal of new equipment had been installed.

Though far less spectacular than any of the previous fires, the fire causing most damage



The RM of Hanover turned over this new \$17,000 fire-fighting unit to the Steinbach Volunteer Fire Brigade in May, 1960. Fire chief Ben Loewen, left, took over the new truck from the municipal fire control committee which consisted of Reeve John Harms and Councillors Krentz and Funk. The town and municipality formed a fire protection area at this time comprising the Town of Steinbach townships 6 and 7 where both the town and municipal units were to be used when necessary. The town previously charged the municipality for attending a fire out of town.

—Carillon News photo

probably occurred in August, 1970 at the Friendly Family Farms plant.

Fire broke out when several employees were engaged in welding supports on an ice-making machine in a new wing at the north end of the building. Flames spread quickly due to a large quantity of highly-flammable styro-foam which had been stockpiled inside the building.

Difficulties in reporting the fire to the fire department, obtaining a water supply and getting into the smoke-filled building to fight the fire greatly hindered firemen and an estimated \$200,000 damage was incurred.

Bush fires

Though the best-remembered fires for most people involved buildings, the bush and grass fires were very serious threats to farmers up until comparatively recent years.

In the fall of 1948, as an example, several bush fires raged in the large area between

Barkfield and Marchand, threatening farm homes and causing much damage to hay meadows, pastures and poplar stands.

Appeals for help were made to Steinbach, Kleefeld and Grunthal that October to battle a fire south of Rosengard. Here men had been fighting a fire for two days and nights, a number doing the two-day shift without any sleep.

Another big fire raged in the district south of Pansy and others destroyed much of the winter's hay supply at Oswald and Barkfield.

These bush fires were small, however, in comparison to the million dollar forest fire which swept the nearby Sandilands Forest Reserve May 1, 1950 and left thousands of acres of ruined young forest growth, charred timber logs and desolate sawmill sites in its wake. And residents were horrified when, in September, 1955 another fire swept the forest reserve and became a funeral pyre for three young men. A fourth ran 14 miles on bare feet to escape the flaming death.

15. Police and crime

The early Mennonites of the East Reserve were, on the whole, a very law-abiding people and differences between them were traditionally solved without court action or police intervention. There was little crime and such wrongdoers as there were, were usually very effectively disciplined by the church.

The first law officer in the Steinbach area was probably a man by the name of Bill Christian. His father had been killed by a bull when he was a boy and he had been raised by the John Smith family on a farm two miles east of Steinbach.

He was hired by the provincial police around 1916 and is believed to have kept the job for approximately a year.

The first locally-hired constable in the RM of Hanover was appointed in July, 1920, only a few months after Steinbach became an Unincorporated Village District.

Anton Schoen was his name and his duties were not overwhelming. The Steinbach village council resolution authorizing his hiring reads as follows:

"That Anton Schoen be employed as village constable at a salary of \$30 per month until December 31, 1920. His duties to be as follows: Keep bicycles off sidewalks, to stop ball-playing on village streets, blocking traffic on sidewalks for pedestrians, look after condition of sidewalks and general nuisance such as disturbing the peace in the village, etc."

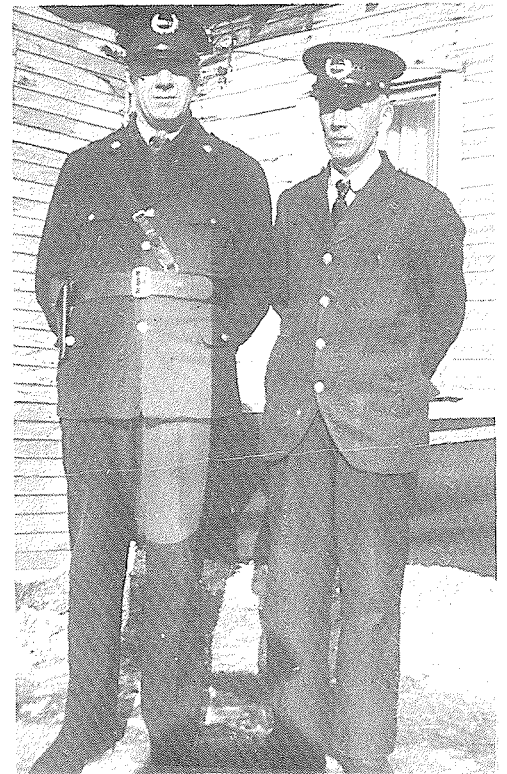
Cst. Schoen kept law and order in Steinbach and vicinity for two years and then changed jobs, taking on a mail route.

The law was represented for the next 25 years by one of the most interesting men in the Steinbach community.

Henry R. Sobering joined the Provincial Police in 1922, hiring a manager to look after the transfer business he'd started in 1919. By

1927, he was so busy with police work that he sold the transfer.

In 1932 the RCMP took over the Manitoba Provincial Police and when Cst. Sobering learned that he would likely be transferred



For 25 years, from 1922 to 1947, Henry R. Sobering, left, was the law in Steinbach and district. Aside from his many years service as policeman, Mr. Sobering at different times in his many years, was a cook, teamster, transfer operator, and highways foreman. He retired from his last job, as foreman for the Department of Highways, in 1965 at the age of 70. With Mr. Sobering in this picture is Bill Schalla, Mr. Sobering's assistant.

away from Steinbach, he resigned with real regret.

Rather than lose this man as law officer, however, the village of Steinbach and the RM of Hanover got together and hired him as a local constable "with other duties as the need arises." It turned out that the "other duties" occupied most of the daytime and so, with police duties often taking up a good deal of the night, he was a busy man.

The village put up \$20 a month towards his salary and the RM of Hanover put up \$10. RCMP, in those days, were getting \$35.

From 1922 until 1947 Cst. Sobering doubled as policeman and head of the public works department in Hanover municipality and the Village of Steinbach. Standing well over six feet tall and weighing over 200 lbs., he never feared for his own physical safety and often faced groups of drunken rowdies in neighboring community halls unassisted. His own fearless attitude combined with his giant size generally cowed the wrongdoers without violence.

His job had its humorous as well as its grim side, however and there was the time that the RCMP liquor squad took Constable Sobering along as interpreter on a homebrew raid out south of town. After starting out they learned that the man they were interested in was at a neighboring farm. As a matter of fact, it was his wedding day and the party was being held nearby. About half of the RCMP officers were young fellows who were taking boxing lessons and anxious to try out their skill, Mr. Sobering recalled in later years. "If they'd have used their heads, we would have been all right, but they charged right in the front door and they were going to grab the homebrew off the table."

A terrific fight developed before it was over.

"After we got most of them cleared out, there was one old man under the stove passing up the homebrew. He could not see or hear very well and thought I was one of the ladies. He just kept on passing the homebrew up to me in bottles and I kept stuffing them under my tunic. At last he handed out a big jug and said that was all. All this time I hadn't said a word but when he looked up and saw who I was he was so mad he went to get the axe.

"I had all I could carry with the bottles and gave the jug to one of the RCMP constables.

The old man caught up with him and smashed the jug with the axe before he got it to the car, so we didn't have as much evidence as we wanted. In the meantime the younger constables got all the boxing practice they wanted and we pulled out."

Helped uncover largest still in Canada

Mr. Sobering was involved in many such experiences in the line of duty and the most interesting of all certainly, concerned the major role he played in uncovering the biggest illicit still anywhere in Canada in 1932.

That a large still was in operation somewhere became evident to the RCMP when, in the early spring of 1932, more than the usual amount of bootleg liquor became available in the district. From the samples the RCMP received, they detected an unusual consistency and high quality. It could not, therefore, come from any small, furtive little still in the backwoods—this looked like big time.

The man selected to find the still for the RCMP was Constable Henry Sobering. He had a reputation for ferreting out stills and the RCMP liquor squad was not surprised, when a month later, Cst. Sobering notified Winnipeg that he was ready for the raid. Two men were sent out from the liquor squad and Cst. Sobering took with him Wm. Schalla, nightwatchman at the Royal Bank in Steinbach and Sobering's faithful assistant for night work.

The four set out early from Steinbach on Friday morning, May 6, 1932 and headed eastward. In order to avoid arousing suspicion they kept to the less travelled trails. Finally, east of Loraine School, the trail petered out. The auto was concealed in the bush and the men set out on foot. They headed for the "big swamp" as the mucky, water-logged area was known locally. As it was springtime and the water level exceptionally high, they experienced some rough going. Sgt. Stubbs, of the liquor squad was a small man and sometimes practically submerged. Const. Sobering, who measured 6'6", walked close behind and every once in a while helped his smaller partner out of a deep hole. After almost three miles of this gruelling march, the four rested on a log and took stock. Had they lost their direction or had they been given a bum steer? Then,

suddenly, they heard the ring of an axe not too far distant and they knew they were still hot on the trail.

They crept forward cautiously now. Two hundred yards later they saw, right before them, the layout they had been looking for. There was one big shed, at least 80 feet long, which they thought must be the distillery; close by stood a smaller building presumably the bunkhouse and kitchen.

As they watched, well hidden in the trees, eight men came out of the cook-shack and went into the distillery. It was one o'clock.

Sergeant Stubbs now carefully waded half around the island and found that the distillery had only three doors. They worked out a strategy. Each of the Winnipeg officers would rush one door while Sobering and Schalla would take the third. Everything went according to plan except that the Winnipeg officers drew their guns, which resulted in five of the men rushing to the door held by Sobering and Schalla. In the tussle that ensued, hefty Constable Sobering grabbed two men. They fought back furiously and finally they all rolled over into the stream that was flowing past the island at this point. Cst. Sobering lost his hold and the two were gone.

Back in the distillery the others were holding three men. While the constables were wringing the mud and water from their trousers voices were again heard outside. Several teams bringing in supplies had come in. The horses were hitched to a rig made from the front runners of sleighs and were bringing in sugar, molasses and other ingredients needed by the distillers. In addition to the teamsters, several men had come along — some to buy liquor, others to get "paid off" for keeping the secret. All surrendered quietly.

The police then took some time to inspect the premises. It was evident that much thought had been given to the location of the plant and details of business. The distillery had a prefabricated type wall, bolted together. There were long rows of huge vats and the brass bands on them were highly polished. The equipment was neat and precisely made. The exhaust pipe from the steam boiler led into the fast flowing creek so that the steam could not be detected from a distance.

The cookshack was well stocked and the eight employees had comfortable bunks. They

worked hard but they received excellent wages and worked under ideal conditions.

Then came the little chore of getting the group of ten men to the nearest lockup. Another trip of six miles through muck and water wasn't anything to look forward to but the distillery employees smiled and said they were not going to get wet. The horses were hitched to the sleighs and the group proceeded along a cleverly-concealed trail filled with logs so that the horses would not sink.

The party came to a farmhouse which had been used as a go-between. Here the brew had been loaded onto trucks and the loads of sugar taken to the still. From here one of the constables had to go ten miles to the nearest phone and call more policemen. Thirteen uniformed RCMP arrived to take the prisoners to Winnipeg where they were released on \$1,000 bail each.

Three days later Sobering and Schalla, as well as several members of the RCMP went back to the site. With them were also a number of curiosity hunters and a Winnipeg Tribune photographer. The equipment could not be moved out so that lawmen decided to blast it out. A ten-stick charge of dynamite was set under the boiler and this went off with a loud bang but the boiler hadn't budged. Only the soft peat gave way. Then they sprinkled alcohol, of which there was plenty, over the entire premises and set a match to it. Flames and smoke rose high into the air as the biggest illicit still ever to have been uncovered in Canada was rapidly devoured by the fire. With the still, the dreams of the liquor ring that had hoped to cash in by the hundreds of thousands went up in smoke.

Court proceedings in Winnipeg carried on for 13 months but none of the former employees "squealed" on the master minds that had brought prosperity to their midst. Nor did the demolishing of one still scare them into inaction; the ring changed its tactics, but not its tempo. In 1938 several smaller stills were uncovered close to Steinbach, believed to have been operated by the same gang. None, however, were ever near as big as the one discovered in 1932 which could produce 1,000 gallons of pure alcohol per day and paid out enough in wages and liquor to create a degree of prosperity in the settlement of hard-pressed farmers.

Aside from the above-mentioned case (which was in a desolate swamp seven miles east of Giroux and not in the RM of Hanover) there were few real criminal cases.

In the early years following settlement one of the most well-remembered misdemeanors involved some boys making steam in a villager's steam engine one night and even blowing the whistle and moving it around.

The owner was so upset about this that he went to the police in Winnipeg. This action was in direct conflict with church rules and the discussion was hot at the next meeting of the brethren. The exact outcome is unknown but the whole affair resulted in the possessions of a neighbor being a bit more respected.

The first robbery of any size in Steinbach's history occurred in 1916 when the safe was blasted at the old K. Reimer and Son store. In order to muffle the blast the thieves piled bales

of cloth around, the damage to which was later estimated at \$1,500.

Nothing of major criminal importance occurred locally after this until around 1935 when burglars tried to rob the bank but were thwarted when it became daylight before they succeeded in burning the vault door.

In 1938 thieves blasted safes at J. R. Friesen and Son, C. T. Loewen and Sons and Steinbach flour mills all in one night. But then there were no more robberies until 1954 when the Steinbach Flour Mills safe was blasted and \$1,700 in cash and some \$3,500 in cheques taken.

As the town grew and the larger police force and an RCMP detachment came into being, there were few successful robberies (one notable exception - in July, 1959 robbers hacked through the roof of Modern Food Centre and stole \$4,196.33 in cash) and the duties of the local constable centred more and more on such things as juvenile delinquency and violations under the Highway Traffic Act and Liquor Control Act.

After 25 years of service in 1947, Cst. H. Sobering left police work and in February, 1950 his son Ben, 28 years of age, was appointed in his place.

Many changes followed in the rapidly-growing community. Cst. Sobering was appointed chief of police and by 1960 the town had already appointed its third constable.

The RM of Hanover, meanwhile, had appointed a full-time constable and municipal officer in 1958. Former part-time constable John Dyck began work out of the municipal office in Steinbach in spring.

The new municipal constable and added town police soon had more work than they could handle. In 1952, only 12 persons appeared before the magistrate in St. Boniface. Then, in July, 1962, Attorney General Sterling Lyon announced the appointment of Armand Dureault to serve the St. Boniface country circuit centering around Steinbach, St. Pierre and Ste. Anne.

Steinbach town council provided room in the fire hall to hold court and every Thursday for the next four years (until the Civic Centre was built) a motley collection of offenders from Steinbach and surrounding communities would gather in the crowded police station and fire hall to see justice done.



Thieves blasted the Steinbach Flour Mills' safe one night in August, 1954 and made off with \$1,700 in cash and cheques. This was Steinbach's first robbery since 1938 when hard-working thieves blasted safes at J. R. Friesen and Son, C. T. Loewen and Sons, Steinbach Flour Mills and the Jac. Friesen garage in Ste. Anne.

—Carillon News photo



The Town of Steinbach police department in 1969-70. Sitting is Chief Ben Sobering and back row, left to right are Sgt. John Thiessen, Cst. Mel Thompson, Cst. Ray Delorme and part-time constable, Art Sobering. In April, 1970 Chief Sobering was appointed a limited jurisdiction magistrate and as a result, Sergeant Thiessen was later appointed chief of police and Cst. Thompson appointed to sergeant in January, 1971. Two new constables, Brian Renwick and Wayne Pierson were also hired in 1970.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

Though the Steinbach Police Department generally had a number of exciting experiences every year, the months of September and October in 1966 stand out in this respect.

In early September that year well-known criminal Kenneth Leishman, tired of his sojourn in Headingly Gaol, engineered an escape with the assistance of three other prisoners.

The escapees took hostages in Stonewall and then drove to Steinbach where they went to the airport and stole a plane belonging to local pharmacist Abe Loewen. The hostages returned to Steinbach, phoned the RCMP and reported the incident while the escapees flew over the U.S. border and became the objects of a wide-spread police hunt.

After several days and a great deal of excitement on both sides of the border, the escapees were captured at Gary, Indiana following a gun battle.

The second incident that fall was hardly that colorful and occurred on Hallowe'en.

For years previous, Hallowe'en had been marked quietly with only a minimum of actual damage. There were always a few practical jokes, certainly, and Steinbach district farmer A. K. Barkman probably held the record for having been the pranksters' target for over 20 years, but there was rarely any malicious damage.

Until October 31, 1966. Then the acts of a few delinquents shocked the community. Rocks were hurled through the collegiate principal's and police sergeant's show windows, a school window was broken and several teachers' cars were damaged.

It proved to be an isolated case and the following quiet Hallowe'en proved that things had returned to normal.

No murder ever committed

Though no murder has ever been committed in Steinbach or the RM of Hanover, there have been several instances in which local police found themselves in positions of real personal danger.

The most recent and also the most notable instance occurred in August, 1968 when Steinbach Chief of Police Ben Sobering narrowly missed receiving a bullet in his stomach while grappling to disarm a revolver-wielding 15-year-old boy.

An attempted murder charge was laid. At the trial it was determined that the boy had escaped from the psychopathic ward of Winnipeg General Hospital and stolen a .22 calibre revolver. He was returned to psychiatric care by the magistrate.

Chief Sobering terminated a 20-year service record with the Steinbach police department on May 1, 1970. At that time he was appointed to the position of limited-jurisdiction magistrate for southeastern Manitoba.

Former Sergeant John Thiessen became police chief and the town hired two new constables in July of the same year, bringing the town's police force to five.

16. The early Mennonites shunned politics

Upon arrival in the East Reserve in 1874 the Mennonites had no political traditions other than those that dealt directly with local government and consequently they were happy to leave these matters to people of other nationalities.

The Mennonite doctrine forbade direct participation in the affairs of the state because elected representatives had the responsibility of declaring war and appropriating funds for military purposes and it would be difficult for a believer in New Testament nonresistance to hold, with any kind of consistency, any responsible position as member of the legislature or federal parliament.

Even in the matter of self government it is interesting to note that each Mennonite church group has its own policy on degree of involvement. The Kleine Gemeinde group, for example, had functioned as a purely religious brotherhood in Russia and when these people founded Steinbach they submitted on the district level to the rule of the Bergthaler group (later Chortitzer) and had no influence on the election of the **Oberschulze** or reeve.

This has changed considerably over the years for most Mennonite denominations. The Kleine Gemeinde church no longer forbids members to vote though it would likely discourage members from running for office in provincial or federal elections.

The Holdemann church, a conservative offshoot of the Kleine Gemeinde, to this day holds strongly to the conviction that any form of direct participation in the affairs of state is wrong and members at Greenland and Steinbach abstain from exercising their franchise in not only provincial and federal elections but in municipal and school elections as well.

It was well into the 1900's before the average Mennonite in the East Reserve took more than a passing interest in provincial and federal

politics though in later years a few have come to believe that politics is an important area of Christian witness and involvement.

PROVINCIAL POLITICS

The electoral division of Carillon, which was the provincial constituency covering most of the East Reserve was formed by an act passed by the legislature in 1886. Following is a record of election dates and the number of votes candidates received from the time of the first election in 1886.

December 9, 1886, Roger Marion, Cons. 118; Martin Jerome, Cons. 75.

July 11, 1888, Martin Jerome, Lib. 126; Paul Chenard, Cons. 99

July 23, 1892, M. Jeromne, Govt, 199; T. A. Bernier, Opp. 173

January 15, 1896, Roger Marion (Opps) 240; Martin Jerome (Govt) 213

December 7, 1899, Martin Jerome (Lib) 337; Roger Marion (Cons) 241

July 20, 1903, Albert Prefontaine (Cons) 399; Arthur Hebert (Lib) 308.

March 7, 1907, Albert Prefontaine (Cons) 423; M. Jarvais (Lib) 318.

July 11, 1910, Albert Prefontaine (Cons) 619; H. Chevrier (Lib) 544.

July 10, 1914 Albert Prefontaine (Cons) 652; Thomas B. Molloy (Lib) 659.

August 6, 1915 T. B. Molly - L. 605; Albert Prefontaine - C. 629

June 29, 1920 Maurice Duprey (Farmer) 973; Albert Prefontaine - C. 925

July 18, 1922 Albert Prefontaine (UFM) 1010; Maurice Duprey (Ind. Farmer) 694.

December 24, 1923, Hon. A. Prefontaine—U.F.M. 1177; Maurice Duprey - Ind. 494

June 28, 1927 Hon. Albert Prefontaine - Govt. 1604; Thomas B. Molloy - Lib. 458

June 16, 1932 Albert Prefontaine (Lib Prog)

2590; Maurice Duprey - C. 804
 July 16, 1935 Louis Philippe Gagnon (L. Prog) 1793; Edmond Prefontaine (Lib. Prog) 1948
 July 27, 1936 Edmond Prefontaine (L. P.) 2430; Chas. McBurney - C. 1223
 April 12, 1941 Ed. Prefontaine (Lib. P. Coal) 1825; W. A. Parentau (So. Cred) 957
 October 15, 1945 Edmond Prefontaine — Acclamation.
 November 10, 1949 Harry B. Johnson (Coal.) 1963; Edmond Prefontaine (Anti Coal.) 2563.
 June 8, 1953, Klass T. Kroeker, (Soc. Cred) 1065; Edmond Prefontaine (Lib) 3278
 June 16, 1958 —Liguori Gauthier (PC) 1047; Henry Mueller (Ind) 608; Edmond Prefontaine (Lib) 2433.
 May 14, 1959 - Edmond Prefontaine (Lib) 2397 Peter J. Thiessen (PC) 1791
 December 14, 1962 - L. A. Barkman (Lib) 2085; DuBois (NDP) 797; Thiessen (PC) 1235
 June 23, 1966 - Z. Audet (PC) 1217; L. A. Barkman (Lib) 2352; Morrison (NDP) 116.
 June 25, 1969 (La Verendrye)—L.A.Barkman (Lib) 1933; John Blatz (PC) 1051; Elmer Reimer (NDP) 721.

The Prefontaines represented the Mennonites for 58 years

Considering the little interest that the Mennonite people have taken in politics in the past, it is of interest to note the high calibre of representation generally, they have received on both the provincial and federal levels.

In Carillon constituency, most of the people of the East Reserve were represented in the Manitoba legislature for a total of 58 years by Albert and Edmond Prefontaine of St. Pierre. The popularity of these two noted legislators, even in the Mennonite circles, can be seen by the fact that two Mennonite contenders from Steinbach lost in attempts to defeat Edmond Prefontaine at the polls, once in 1953 and again in 1959.

Both father and son had an appreciation and respect of the Mennonite people they represented in the provincial legislature. Albert Prefontaine, who was a cabinet minister during part of his political career, knew the people of the East Reserve well and had, in-

deed, even assisted them when they arrived in 1874.

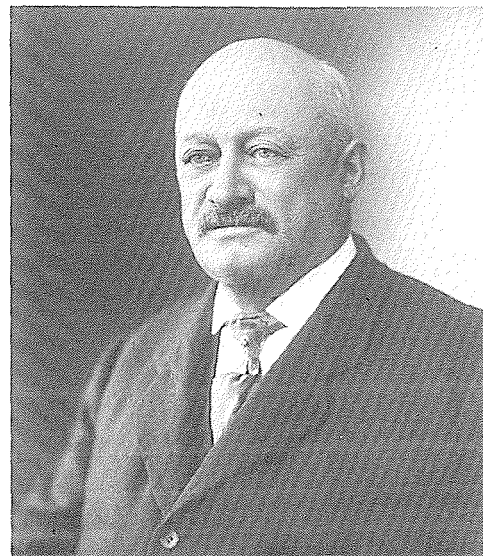
Speaking at the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the first settlers to this area in 1874 at Steinbach in July, 1934, the Hon. Albert Prefontaine, Minister without Portfolio, recalled how 60 years ago he had been a pioneer ferryman at the Red River crossing at Ste. Agathe.

One day, he recalled, a team of oxen pulling a wagon or cart boarded the ferry too quickly and pushed it off shore. The oxen, consequently, were on the ferry while the wagon itself trailed in the water.

Suddenly, said Mr Prefontaine, the wagon box broke off from the wheels below and a woman and two small children fell into the water and were carried downstream. At the same time the heavy wheels dragged the oxen into the water.

While others, closer on shore, ran to rescue the woman and children, Mr Prefontaine jumped into the water to free the oxen which were worth a great deal of money in those days.

Many years after the incident Mr. Prefontaine was speaking in Altona. He related this story and asked whether anyone knew the names of the people involved. After the meeting an old



The Hon. Albert Prefontaine, MLA for Carillon constituency for 30 years. Mr Prefontaine passed away in 1935.

—photo courtesy Mrs. Edmond Prefontaine



The Hon. Edmond Prefontaine, MLA for Carillon for 28 years, 1935 to 1962. He took his father's seat in the by-election following the Hon. Albert Prefontaine's death.
photo courtesy Mrs. Edmond Prefontaine

man came up to Mr. Prefontaine with tears in his eyes and told him that he remembered the incident well. It had been his family that had been saved and he was forever grateful to Mr. Prefontaine and the other people who had averted tragedy that day years ago.

That may have been Mr. Prefontaine's first direct assistance to someone of the Mennonite faith but in later years, as MLA, he, as well as his son who followed him in a career as politician, helped the Mennonite people in many ways.

When Albert Prefontaine passed away, the by-election necessitated by his death in 1935 saw his son Edmond elected to his father's seat. During Edmond Prefontaine's 28 years in the legislature he saw the development of eastern Manitoba from a bushland of trails to an area boasting some of the best highways in the province. Industry and commerce had turned gumbo and swamps into the milkshed of Manitoba.

One of the first promises Mr. Prefontaine

made was to work for more roads in Carillon constituency and his first success came with the construction of the Piney Highway (now Highway 52) and the King Edward Road (now PTH 59).

The biggest political battle during Mr. Prefontaine's career occurred when the coalition government announced that the construction of Highway 75 would take place on the west side of the Red River.

Mr. Prefontaine formed the Short Route Association to organize arguments favoring the east side. The organization was extremely upset when it was finally announced that the road was being built on the west side of the river "because of the weight of traffic on the west side" when there was no road on the east side to compare traffic flow with.

Finally, Mr. Prefontaine announced in the house he would move an inquiry into the whole matter. The inquiry was duly held and Mr. Prefontaine lost but, as Mr. Prefontaine recalled after his retirement in 1962, "I had put them on the spot." As a result of his efforts the highway from Ste. Anne to Steinbach was built as a government project, the first so-called 100 per cent road to be built in this manner in the province.

Another outstanding fight for the veteran politician was his battle against coalition. "I could see that this was necessary in wartime," he recalled after his retirement, "but coalition made a farce of democracy after the war was over...members tried to perpetuate their seats by staging acclamations...in Conservative ridings a Conservative would, by mutual agreement, win his seat by acclamation...and the same for Liberals in Liberal ridings. The government made a re-distribution of seats in a manner to almost eliminate the CCF party...the whole thing got to be ridiculous."

But it wasn't so easy to dislodge the coalition. At one time Mr. Prefontaine walked out of a caucus in protest. Later, at the 1949 session, he asked the speaker for a seat across the floor — open revolt against the Liberal Progressives for sticking to coalition. From this new vantage point he supported a CCF resolution asking for a larger pension for old age pensioners.

Soon Mr. Prefontaine found there were others who opposed the coalition. Jack MacDowel, George Renouf, Hughie B. Morrison and Earl Collins — all Conservatives — bolted

the coalition. Together they formed a smaller coalition to break the bigger coalition, calling themselves the Manitoba Democratic Movement. In the 1949 election this committee had 15 candidates and all six of the originals were re-elected.

Mr. Prefontaine was known as a man not afraid to stand on his convictions. He was the first one to sponsor a motion that the liquor laws be investigated for the purpose of updating them. He knew many others felt as he did but no other members dared bring in the resolution for fear of losing votes. Mr. Prefontaine was convinced this was the right thing to do even though many of his friends around Steinbach disapproved.

In 1951 Mr. Prefontaine was sworn in as Minister of Municipal Affairs and in this capacity amended the Municipal Act to provide for the exemption from taxes of all schools meeting the requirements of the School Attendance Act. He also introduced an act allowing municipalities to exempt certain religious properties from taxation.

Mr. Prefontaine also became known by his friends in the dairy industry as the father of the Milk Control Act. It was only two years after his election in 1935 that he began agitating for an act to control the price of milk similar to the act in force in Ottawa.

The most dramatic moment in the life of this politician and statesman came in the 1951 session of the legislature. In a well-prepared speech lasting well over an hour, Mr. Prefontaine lashed out at the international wheat agreement. Legislative reporters agreed that this was one of the best speeches ever delivered in the House. After it was over Mr. Prefontaine sat down, felt a nausea overtaking him and excused himself and went to his hotel room. There he fell into a comma from which he did not emerge for two weeks. Doctors said it was cerebral hemorrhage and no one held out any hope that he would ever come back to politics again.

But come back he did. The wiry French Canadian returned to his seat on three more occasions, retaining it in the face of growing opposition in 1953, 1958 and 1959.

In 1962 he left politics due to his health. He had already planned on retiring from politics at the time of the 1959 provincial elections but

consented to stand after urgent requests to run again.

Prefontaine endorses Barkman

In retiring, Mr. Prefontaine endorsed the president of the Carillon Liberal Association, Leonard A. Barkman of Steinbach, as his choice for the next Liberal candidate in Carillon constituency.

Premier Roblin called a provincial election for December 14 and L.A. Barkman, mayor of Steinbach, was the unanimous choice of the Carillon Liberals at a nominating convention at St. Pierre November 27.

Victor Prefontaine, a grandson of Albert Prefontaine, made the nomination. He pointed out that it had been the people of Steinbach who in 1903 supported his grandfather to run for office. It was fitting, therefore, he said, that he, the oldest grandson of Albert Prefontaine, now nominate a qualified man from Steinbach and to call upon his fellow men in St. Pierre to support the Steinbach man in a like manner.

Mr. Barkman was widely known throughout the constituency both as mayor of Steinbach and as auctioneer and car dealer. His acceptance of the Liberal nomination put Steinbach town council in the unique position where the mayor was running on one ticket and one of the councillors on another. Peter Thiessen, councillor for Ward 5, had received the nod from the Progressive Conservatives for the same constituency.

An ex-serviceman with an excellent record of involvement in community affairs, Mr. Thiessen knew he was facing powerful competition.

On election day, December 14, Carillon constituents gave Barkman the nod with 2,113 votes compared to Thiessen's 1,274 and Social Credit candidate Dubois' 810.

"L. A." as he came to be known in Steinbach where the maze of Reimers and Barkmans made it easier to identify a man by nickname or two initials, was watched with great interest as he made his debut in the legislature. For some years some people had contended that Steinbach, which is the leading trade centre in the Southeast, should also take the lead in the political field. Now that a man of Mennonite descent had for the first time been elected to represent a southeastern Manitoba constituency, every



L. A. Barkman, left, of Steinbach received congratulations on his June 25, 1969 election as MLA for La Verendrye constituency from his campaign manager, Albert Vielfaure of La Broquerie. Mr. Vielfaure was the Liberal MLA in La Verendrye prior to redistribution and Mr. Barkman was the Liberal MLA in Carillon for seven years prior to redistribution.

—Carillon News photo

word he spoke in the House was closely scrutinized.

Mr. Barkman quickly became a respected member of the House and together with two other Liberal MLA's from the Southeast, Albert Vielfaure (La Verendrye) and John Tanchak (Emerson), promoted the Southeast with legislation primarily regarding roads and agriculture.

Following election in 1962 Mr. Barkman went to the polls on June 23, 1966 and June 25, 1969 and each time won a decisive victory.

In the last provincial election, June 25, 1969, Mr. Barkman no longer ran as candidate for Carillon constituency. Carillon had been absorbed by La Verendrye and Emerson constituencies and consequently MLA for La Verendrye, Albert Vielfaure, chose not to run, giving Mr. Barkman the nomination.

This last election was by far the most interesting because it saw two other men of Mennonite background seeking the same seat. Local restaurateur John Blatz won the Progressive Conservative nomination and Elmer Reimer, associate professor of English at the University of Manitoba won the NDP nomination.

L. A. Barkman won the seat handily with 1,928 votes as compared to Blatz's 1,044. Most amazing was the NDP candidate's 713 votes. While La Verendrye stayed Liberal, political traditions in the rest of the province were in shambles as the NDP steam-rolled over 28 constituencies to form the new government.

FEDERAL POLITICS

The electoral district of Provencher, which despite ever-shifting boundaries has represented most of the Mennonites within the East Reserve since 1874, was formed in 1871.

According to parliamentary records, "the Electoral District of Provencher shall consist of all the settlements on the Red River and in the neighborhood lying between the south line of the Electoral District of Selkirk and the frontier of the United States, including the settlements on the Seine, at Oak Point, or Saint Anne, and shall return one member."

It is of great historical interest to note that Louis Riel, the famous Metis leader who led the Red River Uprising, was, on paper at least, for several years the elected mem-

ber representing the Mennonites of the East Reserve. Considering that the Mennonites were given Metis and Indian land they were almost certainly resented by Riel but whatever his feelings there was little he could do. Though elected in 1873 and again in 1874, he was banished from the country in 1875. He was never able to take his seat in parliament because he was considered a revolutionary but despite this he sneaked into the Ottawa parliamentary buildings one day, apparently at a time when the chief clerk was out, and signed the Parliamentary Scroll as a Member of Parliament in his usual firm, bold handwriting.

Charged with treason, Riel was tried before a Court in Regina where he was convicted and sentenced to hang. The sentence was carried out November 16, 1885.

Members of Parliament for the electoral district of Provencher, Manitoba, since 1871

General Elections	Name of Member	Political affiliation
1871	P. Delorme	C.
1872	Sir Geo. E. Cartier	C.
1878	L. Duduc	C.
1882	Jos. Royal	C.
1887	Jos. Royal	C.
1891	A. A. C. La Riviere	C.
1896	A. A. C. La Riviere	C.
1900	A. A. C. La Riviere	C.
1904	J.E.Cyr	L.
1908	J. P. Molloy	L.
1911	J. P. Molloy	L.
1917	J. P. Molloy	L.
1921	A. L. Beaubien	P.
1925	A. L. Beaubien	L.P.
1926	A. L. Beaubien	L.P.
1930	A. L. Beaubien	L.P.
1935	A. L. Beaubien	L.
1940	R. Jutras	L.
1945	R. Jutras	L.
1949	R. Jutras	L.
1953	R. Jutras	L.
1957	W. H. Jorgenson	P.C.
1958	W. H. Jorgenson	P.C.
1962	W. H. Jorgenson	P.C.
1963	W. H. Jorgenson	P.C.
1965	W. H. Jorgenson	P.C.
1968	Mark G. Smerchanski	L.

By-Elections

1874 - Sept. 3	Louis Riel ¹	
1875 - March 31	G. B. Bannantyne	L.
1879 - December 30	Jos. Royal	C.
1889 - January 24	A. A. C. La Riviere	C.

Politics held little interest in the years around the turn of the century for the Mennonites of the East Reserve and little is known about early members who represented Provencher with the exception of Louis Riel.

The real political action in this constituency has always been concentrated farther south, at Dominion City. Roseau Crossing, as it was known in its earliest days, was one of Manitoba's most strategic settlements and at one time the founding fathers of this community hoped to make it the capital of Manitoba.

Except for a 10-year stretch from 1957 to 1967 when Progressive Conservative Warner Jorgenson represented the constituency, the Liberals dominated Provencher from 1904 on and all of these men made their way to Dominion City which was the convention centre of both Liberals and Conservatives.

In 1939, when an open Liberal convention nominated Rene Jutras for the first time, the Dominion City curling rink could hardly contain the crowd and it was difficult to say how often a man had voted. Later in the day, when the outcome had been determined, the floor broke down in the old Roseau Crossing Hotel when Liberal merry-makers celebrated.

In 1940, when Arthur Beaubien Sr., then M.P., was appointed to the Senate, Mr. Jutras was Mr. Beaubien's choice as a successor and he won election in 1940 and again in 1945, 1959 and 1953.

The Conservative nominating convention at Dominion City on February 28, 1957 marked the beginning of several changes in Provencher. The nominations of 39-year-old Ste. Elizabeth district farmer Warner Jorgenson had the greatest implication, of course, but the fact that a 22-year-old Stein-

1. Louis Riel, leader of Red River Uprising of 1870, was returned for the electoral district of Provencher at the by-election of 1874 by acclamation. On April 16, 1874, he was on motion and expelled from the House of Commons. Writ was issued July 21, nomination September 3. Louis Riel, although being away, was returned by acclamation. February 25, 1874, a resolution was passed by the House of Commons declaring him an outlaw.

The boundaries of the Provencher electoral district were altered four times since 1871, in 1903, 1924, 1952 and 1966.



Rene Jutras first entered politics in 1940 when he was elected MP for Provencher. He took the seat formerly occupied by the late Arthur Beaubien Sr. who was appointed to the Senate. Mr. Jutras held the seat until June 10, 1957 elections in which Warner Jorgenson edged him out by 221 votes. This dramatic photo shows Mr. Jutras just after his defeat in 1957.

—Carillon News photo

bach graduate Alf Warkentin also sought the nomination possibly indicated a growing political awareness on the part of Mennonites, many of whom had chosen not to exercise their franchise in earlier years.

A 53-year-old record of Liberal representation for Provencher was shattered in the June 10, 1957 federal election when Warner Jorgenson won the traditionally-Liberal riding. In a three-way, hard-fought, nip and tuck battle, voters came out in record numbers to give Jorgenson 4,576 votes to win the seat from Rene Jutras, who received 4,355 votes.

Little known Social Credit candidate Hugh Campbell came a close third with a surprising 3,899 votes.

An outstanding factor contributing to the defeat of Mr. Jutras was a three-way split in the French-Canadian vote, unprecedented in Provencher politics.

Less than a year later, in early April,

1958, in a federal election called by Prime Minister Diefenbaker, Mr Jorgenson rode the crest of the Diefenbaker popularity to retain the seat for the Conservatives. Of 15,324 votes cast, more than half — 8,369 to be exact — went to Mr Jorgenson. His strongest opponent, Liberal Rene Prefontaine, drew 5,315. The vote in Provencher was an all-time high with 76.5 per cent of the electorate voting.

As the fortunes of the Diefenbaker government faded and the Liberals slowly took over, elections were held every few years, in 1962, 1963 and 1965, but Mr Jorgenson kept his seat.

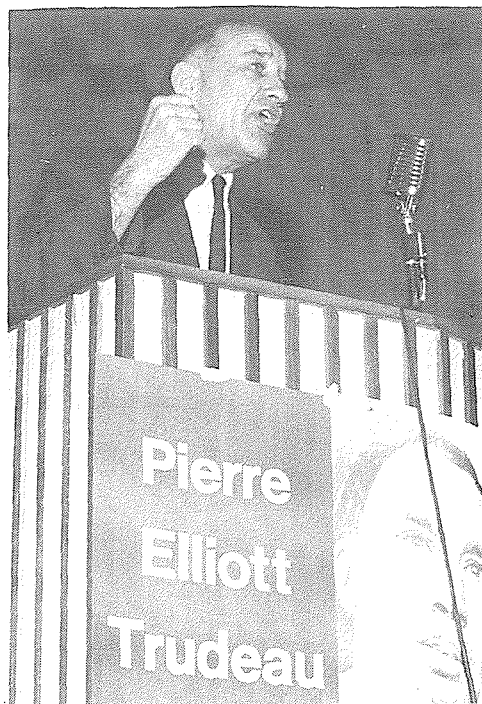
Then came the June, 1968 and a reversal of 1957 when Mr Jorgenson snatched the Provencher seat from Liberal Rene Jutras. 1957 had been the dawning of the Diefenbaker era; 1968 was to be the dawning of the Trudeau era. Mark Smerchanski, a Winnipeg millionaire and a first-time Liberal contender, upset Mr Jorgenson by some 971 votes.

The victory came as a surprise to many who had watched Mr Jorgenson develop as a keen



Warner Jorgenson first won election as MP for Provencher in June, 1957 when he defeated Rene Jutras. The election marked the first time since 1904 that a Conservative had won Provencher.

—Carillon News photo



Liberal Mark Smerchanski defeated incumbent Provencher Member of Parliament Warner Jorgenson in the June, 1968 election. The victory came as a surprise to many who had watched Mr. Jorgenson develop as a keen politician in his 11 years in office. Following his defeat as MP he won the provincial by-election in Morris constituency in 1969.

—Carillon News photo

politician during the previous 11 years in office but not to workers who tried to trail the new M.P. from his sunrise-to-midnight campaign.

Mr. Smerchanski ran on a ticket of common sense government, a promise to help bring new industry to the rural parts of Provencher and his belief in Trudeau's policy of a strong central government.

Mr Jorgenson worked largely on the record of the Conservative government, particularly its ability to sell wheat. In this respect, farmers in the wheat-growing districts tended to vote for Jorgenson rather than industrialist Smerchanski. However, in some of the French districts this did not hold true, with a greater swing towards Smerchanski and Trudeau.

Dief drew 3,000 in '58

Though various government leaders including premiers and the former prime minister Lester B. Pearson visited Steinbach over the years, a crowd unprecedented in size for any political event held in the Southeast gathered 3,000 strong in Steinbach in March 1958 to hear Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

While 1,500 jammed into the Penner Tire and Rubber Co. storage shed in the former tabernacle, another estimated 1,500 surged round the building outside, listening to the public address system.

The crowd heard the prime minister review the accomplishments of his government and vow even greater achievements if re-elected. They heard him praise warmly his associates in the government, including Warner Jorgenson, incumbent member of parliament for Provencher and flay mercilessly the previous Liberal government as a group long on talk and short on action.

In pungent, rhetorical sentences the prime minister went over his government's achievements one at a time. The predominantly farm audience cheered him to the rafters when he recalled how his administration had closed the door to the dumping of U. S. poultry on the Canadian market. They cheered again when he said that the farm price stabilization legislation enacted the previous winter by his government was the "greatest (hope) for farmers of any legislation ever placed on the statute books of this country."

"Dief" came back to Steinbach in October, 1965, seven years later. For a full hour and 17 minutes the old Tory chieftain used all the devices of the famous Diefenbaker rhetoric to try and show the Liberals up in the worst possible light and win the backing of his audience. But for those of the 700 people present who remembered the triumphant rally of 1958, it was only a pale reflection of that event and a foreboding of things to come. The 1965 and 1968 federal elections saw Mr Diefenbaker's fortunes fall progressively further until the formerly-great leader was finally even deprived of the leadership of his party.



Lester B. Pearson, later prime minister of Canada, visited Steinbach in April, 1962, prior to the June 18 election. He spoke to an audience of about 900 people including 350 high school students. Everyone had a chance to shake his hand before or after the meeting.

—Carillon News photo



Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, during his triumphant stop-over at Steinbach in 1958. Platform guests included some of the biggest guns in the Progressive Conservative armoury. Visible on this photo are the Hon. Erric Willis, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, Premier Duff Roblin, Provencher MP Warner Jorgenson and Steinbach Chamber of Commerce president, John D. Penner and Mrs Penner.

—Carillon News photo



Prime Minister John Diefenbaker drew this huge crowd in March, 1958 at the Steinbach tabernacle. Some 3,000 people, the largest crowd at a local political event ever, packed the building and listened at loudspeakers outside. In a manner reminiscent of Winston Churchill, the prime

minister touched the gamut of his audience's emotions, now fervently dedicating himself and his government to the prosperity and welfare of the Canadian farmer, now growling defiance at his political opponents.

—Carillon News photo

17. "Peace we can promise you."* ...the Mennonites, military service and the two world wars

Having traditionally taken the sixth Commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") literally, the Mennonites have frequently paid with their lives for their refusal to bear arms.

Promises of exemption from military service therefore have been key factors in practically all the major Mennonite migrations, including the one from Russia to Canada beginning in 1874.

The Mennonites had settled in southern Russia beginning in 1789 after persecution in Prussia. Tzarina Elizabeth II had invited the Mennonites and promised freedom of religion and exemption from military service.

For nearly 100 years, till the early 1870's, the Mennonites prospered and enjoyed their freedoms but then came the liberation of the Russian peasants in 1861 together with various changes and reforms. As in Prussia before, jealousies arose over the success of the Mennonites and great pressure was brought upon authorities to do away with their special privileges.

As a result, after awhile, the Mennonites were made to teach the Russian language in their schools. Then came strong indications that the next move would be to do away with the military service exemption and the very rumors of this were enough to start the Mennonites packing.

As related in the early chapters in this book, thousands left land and country to settle in Canada where the freedoms they sought were promised in writing.

The first point in the letter they received acknowledging special benefits and rights from the Canadian government stated:

"1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites."

Though the wording here was changed by the government at a later date (unbeknown to the Mennonites for 45 years) they took the letter as received in good faith and came to the new country.

Following successful settlement in Manitoba, the Mennonites were given further indication of their freedoms when Lord Dufferin visited the Mennonite settlement on August 21, 1877 and stated in a most complimentary speech to the people: "If you have come hither to seek for peace — peace at least we can promise you." Never again, he told the Mennonite settlers, would they be called upon to stain their hands with human blood.

But then, in Canada as in Russia before, the Mennonites ran into trouble with their special rights. Several problems occurring around the beginning of the First World War made those years unpleasant ones for the now-well-established settlers.

First there was the trouble with the schools. The Mennonites wanted to keep German language instruction and the government was determined to change this and improve the quality of education. In 1907 the government had also decreed that the Union Jack be flown over every public school building. This also bothered the Mennonites because to them, flag-waving and the like reeked of militarism which they'd travelled many thousands of miles to escape.

With the outbreak of World War I and the resulting strong feelings of nationalism, the Mennonites came under attack from various patriotic organizations. As a result they were disfranchised by the War-Time Elections Act of 1917.

The whole conflict with the school problem and the pressures against the Mennonites later resulted in many leaving the country but

* Lord Dufferin addressing the Mennonites near Kleefeld Aug. 21, 1877



Steinbach and district World War Two veterans. Front row: John Thiessen, Ed Barkman, Herman Barkman, Alvin Reimer, Harry Reimer, Ted Barkman, Joe Friesen, Ernie Harder, Steve Friesen, unknown. Second row: Neil Unrau, Ken Toews, Abe Goossen, Walter Friesen, Joe Schmidt, Fred Barkman, Albert Dueck, Ed Sobering, unknown, Peter Barkman, Norm Friesen, unknown. Third row: John Poetker, Henry Hildebrand, Gordon Barkman, Cornie Wiens, Erd Reimer, unknown, John Reichel, Bill Giesbrecht, Dave Toews,

Bob Penner, Harold Reimer, Bill Funk, Geo. Toews, Jac. Wiebe, Geo. Nikkel, Arnold Wiebe, Ben Unruh, Peter Guenther, John Nightengale, Peter Thiessen, Tom Ladobruk, George Derksen, Dan Cohoe. Back row: John Friesen, Neil Friesen, Walt Barkman, Neil Reimer, Frank Schalla, Alvin Funk, — Penner, unknown, Ernie Goossen, Geo. Loewen?, Walter Schmidtke and John K. Barkman.

—photo by J. D. Barkman

"PEACE WE CAN PROMISE YOU"

the government kept its promise and no Mennonite was forced into service in World War I.

The circumstances surrounding the Mennonites in Manitoba in World War II were altogether different, and it was much more difficult for them to resist becoming actively engaged in the war effort.

The problem of military service again came to the fore and the federal government solved it by ruling that all Mennonites who had immigrated under the agreement of 1873 were automatically exempt from service, but those who arrived later, following the First World War, would have to provide proof that they were genuine conscientious objectors.

Approximately 2,500 Mennonite men in Manitoba received conscientious objector status while some 2,000 joined the Armed Forces. The conscientious objectors served in work camps in the country and many of those who joined the Forces distinguished themselves in the great conflict. Mennonite communities donated many thousands of dollars for war relief.

Available records show that 117 persons from Steinbach and district served in the Canadian Armed Forces in World War II with over 100 in active service. One family counted six boys overseas at one time while another had five members in active service.

The first Steinbach native to be distinguished for military service was Pte. Henry Tarasenco, 26, who received the British Empire Medal.

On March 2, 1946 about 80 Steinbach servicemen and their friends crowded the collegiate auditorium for a dinner prepared in their honor by the board of trade, the town and the Women's Institute.

Jac G. Kornelson presented leather wallets to the men on behalf of the town; over half of them had been his students.

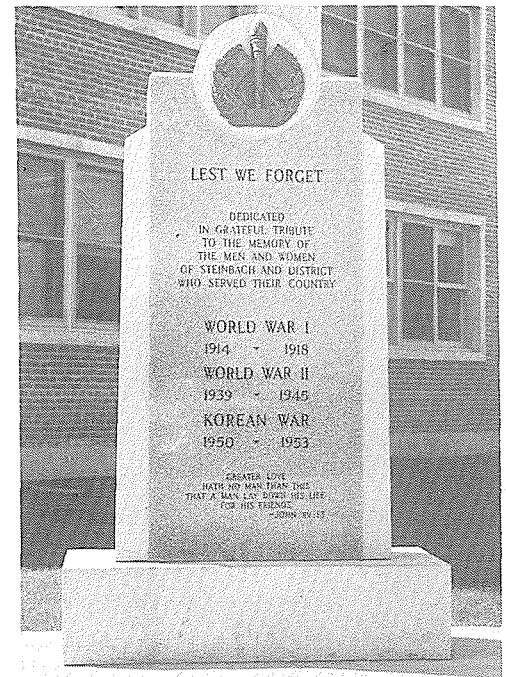
Two families receiving special mention: Mr and Mrs Jac. D. Barkman with six boys in the services and Mr and Mrs A. A. Reimer with five boys in the services.

A two-minute silence was observed for the five missing boys: George Barkman, Ronald Campbell, Frank Giesbrecht, Jake Klippenstein and Nick Peters.

The Legion

The organization meeting of the Carillon branch (Steinbach branch since 1951) of the Royal Canadian Legion was held at the Hanover Municipal Hall on March 13, 1946. Elected president was C. W. Kroeker. Elected treasurer was Neil Friesen who has held that office ever since.

The charter presentation and initiation of members was held at the collegiate auditorium (presently the Kornelsen School) in November, 1946 and the following veterans were members



The cenotaph at the corner of Main and Reimer was erected and dedicated in September, 1956. Financial assistance for the cenotaph came from the Town of Steinbach, RM of Hanover, business people and private citizens. Hundreds of people lined the streets and crowded around the cenotaph to witness the dedication. The parade down Main Street with the flags of various Legion branches followed by 30 Steinbach branch Legionnaires and the 50-piece Warroad Warrior band, made a spectacle never before witnessed in Steinbach.

—Carillon News photo

for that year: Fred Barkman, Peter W. Barkman, Herman Barkman, Walter Barkman, Irwin Barkman, John K. Barkman, Gordon Barkman, Albert Dueck, John F. Friesen, Neil Friesen, Bert Guenther, Aron Kroeker, Neil Kroeker, George Nickel, John Nightengale, Joe P. Schmidt, Bob Scarrow, Wm. Schalla, Henry Toews, Jack Thiessen, David P. Toews, George P. Toews, Peter J. Thiessen, E. Weir and John Wiens.

A Ladies' Auxiliary was formed in 1949. Until the erection of the Hall in late 1949, meetings were held in the Playhouse Theatre, Walt's Studio, and in good weather, at the sports field.

The Branch was one of the originals in the ecumenical movement, starting with memorial services by the Lutheran and United Churches in 1958. These services were joined by the Roman Catholics in 1959 and a Mennonite pastor in 1969.

Almost \$3,000 has been spent on local wel-

fare and medical cases out of the Poppy Fund which has received very good local support.

A highlight in the history of the Steinbach Legion was the establishing of the cenotaph at the corner of Main and Reimer. This was made possible through the efforts of the Legion and financial assistance from the Town of Steinbach, RM of Hanover, businessmen and private citizens.

An impressive ceremony marked the dedication and unveiling of the cenotaph in September, 1956. The Hon. Duff Roblin, Premier of Manitoba and vice-president of the Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Command of the Canadian Legion, gave the address and performed the unveiling.

The parade down Main Street with the flags of the various Legion branches, followed by 30 Steinbach Legionnaires and the 50-piece Warroad Warrior band, made a spectacle never before witnessed in Steinbach.

18. Education in Steinbach

by Peter Dyck

The history of education had its beginnings in Steinbach within a few months after the first Mennonites settled in the community in the late summer of 1874. Though the necessities of life, notably food and shelters for their families received first attention, the matter of schooling for the children was one the pioneers considered very important.

All homes with children had their own tutoring services that year as Rev. Jacob Barkman and Klaas Reimer went from home to home to instruct the pupils. That year, at least, education was free to all who wanted it. The first local school building didn't even rate the status of the traditional red school house but was a mere 14 feet by 20 feet log structure with a thatched roof located very near to where the old town office now stands, opposite the post office. In addition to being a school building, this small structure had a 12 feet by 14 feet addition which formed the residence of the first teacher Abraham T. Friesen. Twelve pupils were registered that year during the five-month term which netted Mr. Friesen a total of \$40 in wages plus lodging and firewood.

The curriculum at that time stressed the three "R's" and Bible studies. A week's timetable in 1875 provided for the following: eight hours of arithmetic, three hours of Bible stories, one hour of geography, two hours of grammar, 10 hours devoted to reading and five to writing.

Friday afternoons were more relaxed but still reflected the stern religious attitude of the Mennonites as students recited the catechism and passages from the Bible. Another popular Friday afternoon activity in the early school consisted of locating Bible verses in competition with other students. Only one examination was held each year, at the end of the

term. In the early years and also for a number of years following, all instruction was in the German language.

The following winter, in 1876, a young man of 19 years who was destined to become one of Steinbach's most famous teachers was hired as full time teacher. Not only did Gerhard E. Kornelsen become the community's education leader for the next 33 years, but he was also the man who made the name Kornelsen synonymous with education in Steinbach.

Until 1880, all school costs were borne by the local homesteaders who contributed jointly to school building construction and upkeep and also paid the teachers' salary on a per-student basis. For example, one method of educational financing at the time consisted of levying a one-dollar charge against every homestead as a base. If any additional money was needed, and there usually was, each father would be levied further costs for every child he had in school. The system worked well for the first several years but eventually broke down since large families were often taxed more than they could afford and the system also taxed those without children.

Steinbach's educational progress took a big



The old Steinbach school, built around 1880. It was approximately 24 feet wide and 60 feet long. On Sundays it was used as a church.

—photo by J. D. Barkman

step forward during the 1879 - 89 term when its school was registered with the provincial government. It was officially designated as District No. 65. Registration of the school meant no loss of local control, however, as the government made no demands on Mennonite parochial schools at this time. Registration brought about one main change: namely, it provided for a grant of 65 cents per day per teacher and substantially increased salaries. Instruction remained in German.

By 1880 the first one-room school was badly overcrowded and new facilities were called for. A frame building 60 feet by 24 feet was erected on the site where the present post office stands and, in those days, the building was considered modern with six-foot-wide desks replacing the old hand-made fourteen-footers.

Very few changes took place until the "gay Nineties". The teacher received wages of a dollar per day plus firewood and pasture for his livestock and the curriculum remained much the same as in the early days. Early records tell of the first inspection of the school by Inspector White on December 4, 1888 and also lists the school board members at the time. They were Jacob S. Friesen, John G. Barkman, P. T. Barkman and John R. Reimer. Mr. Friesen acted as secretary-treasurer.

The mid-Nineties saw a few changes in staff, wages, length of school term and grounds improvement. Steinbach ceased being a one-teacher village in 1897 when Dietrich Friesen was hired to assist Mr. Kornelsen who became principal. The school term was lengthened to 150 days as enrolment increased to about 75.

There is some confusion as to when the first English lessons were introduced. One source states that limited instruction in English began as early as 1898 in the school while other old records indicate the first English lessons began in the summer of 1907 under the direction of Peter T. Barkman as a sort of summer course. At any rate, it appears that some of Steinbach's leading citizens were quick to realize the importance of the language and its instruction to their children as a second language. The early introduction of English instruction in the community undoubtedly contributed greatly to bringing Steinbach into the public school system in 1912, a change which took place with comparative ease in contrast to a

bitter private school battle which erupted in many other Mennonite communities.

The private school problem ¹

The first and only real rift between the Mennonites and the Manitoba government occurred not long after the turn of the century and lasted as late as the early 1920's. Perhaps even worse, it caused the Mennonites to divide themselves into two opposing camps, those who favored public schools and the others who fought desperately to retain their private learning institutions. Though a number of Mennonite schools were registered with the Manitoba School Board by 1880, many groups feared that registration and resulting acceptance of the provincial grant would eventually result in deliverance of their schools to the outside world.

Anticipating a strife, the government brought little pressure to bear upon the Mennonite schools during the 1880's but rather suggested that the Mennonites improve their school system which authorities felt was deteriorating. An inherent weakness of Mennonite schools was not their structure but rather their subject material. Because the Mennonites of their own choice chose to live in relative isolation from the rest of the country, their educational system could not draw from the accumulated storehouse of knowledge of past civilizations. Dr. E. K. Francis in his book discussing Mennonite settlement in Manitoba describes the school situation as follows:

"While other schools in the province soon began to outgrow the shortcomings of the pioneer period with the help of men and ideas brought in from the older parts of Canada and from Great Britain, the Mennonite schools stagnated and eventually deteriorated as the fund of their educational heritage was gradually exhausted with the passing years."

Gradual adoption of or conversion of private schools to public was at first largely motivated by financial considerations because of the government's teacher salary grant. Furthermore, districts organizing themselves into municipalities could recover all

1. See the following chapter on "The Private School Problem and the Trek to Paraguay."

education costs by levies on municipal properties. The private school problem grew more complex as some groups within the Mennonites asked for municipal organization and public schools while others opposed the organization of district schools.

It is not known exactly how strong opposition to public schools was felt in Steinbach and other parts of the East Reserve since the private school strife was not nearly as violent here as in the West Reserve. Opposition to public schools and the issue of compulsory school attendance did, however, eventually lead to the first Mennonite migration to Paraguay in the 1920's. In fact, most Mennonites in the East Reserve agreed upon a conservative school policy until 1912 when Steinbach opened the first public school which remained public even though private schools did exist for several years after in Steinbach and other parts of the East Reserve.

A minority group in Steinbach did oppose public schools after 1911 when all schools were ordered to display the Union Jack. This edict smacked of militarism to some leaders and several years later a private school building was built near the site of the present Grace Mennonite Church. Private instruction had, however, been carried out for two years previous in a home near the southern end of the village. The private school had two principal teachers, G. E. Kornelsen and Ben S. Rempel, who taught continuously almost up to the time the school closed in May or June of 1919. Mr. Kornelsen resigned at the end of the 1918 term and Mr. Rempel left his teaching job in March of 1919. Only one man, John C. Reimer, taught the whole term during 1919, the last year for Steinbach's private school.

This private school had two main promoters, Elder Peter Dueck and Jacob W. Reimer, one of Steinbach's most prosperous merchants. The latter became the driving force behind the school and at times even paid the tuition for those unable to afford the cost.

Expenses in running the school and teachers' salaries were covered largely by tuition fees and the school received regular visits from the public school inspector. This successful private school with enrolment as high as 70 was completely bilingual with German instruction in the morning and English in the after-

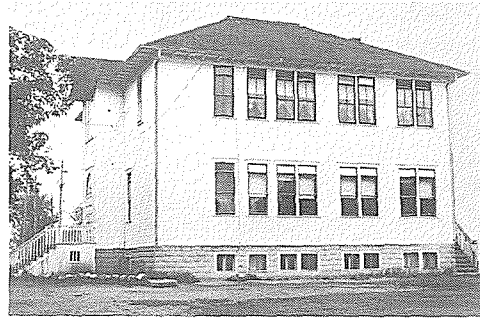
noon. The school died a natural death in 1919 after its two strongest supporters passed away within a year.

Mennonite opposition to publicly-administered schools and English instruction was not just in principle but to what they thought would lead to abolition of their way of life and religious teachings. One Mennonite elder during the 1880's had said that "a knowledge of the English language (and consequently greater knowledge of the outside world) would make it all the easier for the children to lapse into the great world of sin outside of the Mennonite communities." The desire for knowledge outside of that needed for participation in religious functions, local community life and the occupation of a simple farmer was considered a worldly pretense by many Mennonites at the time. They felt that if it was not outright evil in itself, it certainly was an occasion for sin. Many early Mennonite settlers also held the view that a man who proved unworthy of homesteading could always become a school teacher. This latter concept in no small way hindered the progress of Mennonite private schools since a serious shortage of qualified teachers existed at all times.

Kornelsen School built

Enrolment in Steinbach's public school kept increasing even with the private school in operation and in 1912 the second school was abandoned for a new four-room building located just a few feet northwest of the first log school. The old school building, after seeing 33 years of continuous instruction, was bought by G. G. Kornelsen in 1913. He broke it down and sold the lumber. Five years later, Steinbach's teacher count increased to five and in 1920 Steinbach began its first high school instruction with Jacob G. Kornelsen and A. P. Friesen as teachers. The one-room collegiate expanded to two rooms in 1925 while the other four classrooms in the school served the lower grades.

The Manitoba School Attendance Act, passed March 10, 1916, demanded not only that all children between the ages of seven and 14 years attend school, but also that English be the chief language of instruction. However, the Mennonites were free to instruct in Germ-

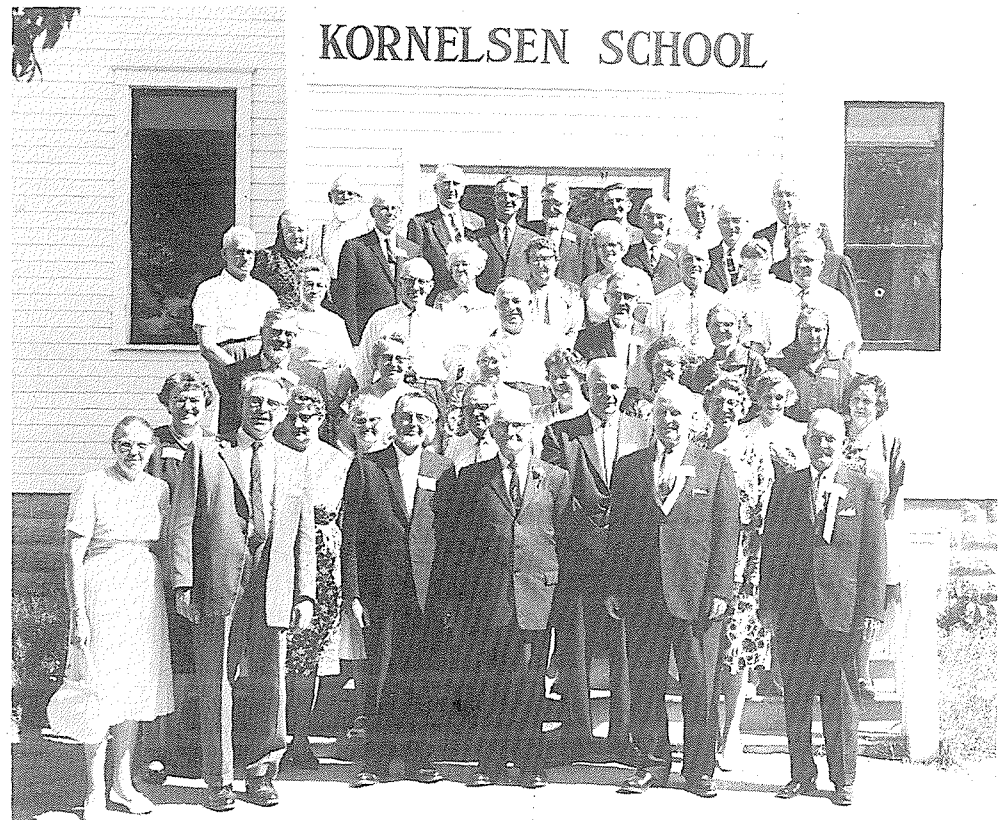


The Kornelsen School, well remembered by many Steinbach residents, was built in 1913, just a few feet northwest of the first log school which was bought by G. G. Kornelsen that same year. The four-room school, under the principalship of Miss Mary Kornelsen for many years, served until 1964 when it was torn down to make way for Steinbach's new civic building.

—Carillon News photo

an for certain periods as allowed them under provisions of the Laurier-Greenway Compromise passed in 1897. While the new Attendance Act was generally adhered to in Steinbach, many smaller settlements who still clung to their private schools found themselves in frequent violation of the new act. Under pressure from provincial authorities, many eventually compromised by converting their schools to public institutions. Others resisted stubbornly, insisting that the Dominion government had granted them freedom of education as one of the conditions of their entry to Canada.

Though not occurring in Steinbach, many public schools which had begun on a private basis now became private again as various Mennonite settlements sought to escape the new legislation governing education in the province. In the fall of 1918, the Manitoba government clamped down on Mennonite private



In July, 1964, efforts were made to form a reunion of the original classes of students who attended at Kornelsen School in 1913. While some couldn't come for the reunion, many did, as this photo shows. The school building was torn down not long after this reunion was held.

—Carillon News photo

schools which it termed inadequate, and began requisitioning them to serve as public schools. These new measures resulted in heavy and repeated fines levied against parents, teachers and also ministers who urged parents not to send their children to public schools. Some parents in the West Reserve near Morden even spent time in jail rather than have their children attend public institutions. The Mennonites were on the brink of losing all their private schools under pressure from the provincial government and they did everything possible short of violence to protect what they considered their promised rights. Eventually the Mennonites lost, both in several court cases and also in practice.

Dr. Francis writes: "For it was no more a question of educational standards which prompted the authorities to destroy the Mennonite private grade schools once and for all and to replace them with English public schools. It was part of a consistent national policy aimed at the assimilation of ethnics to safeguard national unity and cultural uniformity. In this policy the school figured prominently as the most effective means to wean the children of immigrants away from the traditions of their group and to indoctrinate them with the ideals and values of the dominant majority."

Yet during these years of unsteady climate for the Mennonites the people of Steinbach gave continued support to the public school system, as witnessed by swelling pupil counts. For example, total enrolment in elementary and high school classes doubled in the 15-year period between 1921 and 1936 from 196 students to 377. The years after 1920 also saw the removal of many old and faithful teachers who had devoted a greater part of their lives to teaching only to discover that they were no longer needed as teacher qualifications grew stiffer and young teachers with more education appeared.

The November 20 edition of *Steinbach Post* published the following school statistics showing the number of students in each grade and the teachers: Grade 1, 44 pupils, Miss Mary Kornelsen; grade 2, 41 pupils, Miss Nita Reimer; grade 3, 44 pupils, Miss Agnes Wiebe; grades 4 and 5, 51 pupils, Peter S. Guenther; grades 5 and 6, approximately 45 pupils, P.J.B. Reimer and 46 pupils in grades 7 and 8 under in-

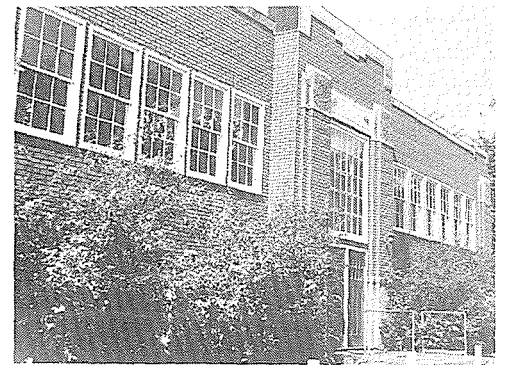
struction from A. P. Toews. Jac Kornelsen and Julius G. Toews taught 46 high school students in grades 9, 10 and 11.

New collegiate for Steinbach

In 1936, accommodations for high school students were completely inadequate and trustees decided to ask Steinbach's ratepayers for a new high school. On January 18 that year, voters approved a by-law authorizing the school board to borrow \$20,000 to erect a new six-classroom building. The new school, completed late in 1936, was more than just another school but served as a monument to Steinbach's citizens who had voted better than five to one in favor of the school. New facilities enabled the board to enrich the curriculum a year later to include woodwork, sewing, book-keeping and later shorthand.

"The present trend in education is toward the practical," the *Steinbach Post* said in an article in November of 1938. "Not only should students accumulate knowledge but in addition they should develop skills. With this as an aim of the educational policy of our school, sewing and cooking are being taught to the girls and woodwork is offered to the boys."

It was also noted that the school board at the time considered any funds spent on practical education a worthwhile investment.



Steinbach's new collegiate institute built in 1936 was a source of pride to both educators and parents. Built that year at a cost of about \$20,000, the school served as a collegiate for 26 years after which it was used until the present time as a junior high. The school graduated its first class on June 30, 1938.

—Carillon News photo

Before discussing further Steinbach's public school system and its gradual development to the present state, it is important to note the birth of another local private school.

In 1936, just when ratepayers were ratifying a new school by-law, members of the Kleine Gemeinde denomination and others built the Steinbach Bible School, a privately-controlled institution primarily interested in training young people in the Mennonite faith. The school, which in 1947 had an enrolment of 86, changed its name to Steinbach Bible Academy that year and later to Steinbach Bible Institute.

In addition to its religious instruction, the school offered a full high school program recognized by the Department of Education. All costs of operation were, and still are, borne by students and contributions from churches and their related organizations.

This institute was heartily greeted by those who still opposed public schools in 1936 and has continued to receive support to the point of having to expand its facilities several times.

S.C.I.'s first grade 12 graduation in 1938

It was a moment of pride for teachers, students and parents alike on June 30, 1938 when Steinbach held its first graduation exercises for 10 grade 12 graduates. Principal J. G. Toews presented the diplomas to the new graduates who were honored in the Central Church along with their parents, followed by a reception in the new collegiate. The graduates were: Viola Bracken, Helen Penner, Esther Goossen, Lydia Janz, Elsie Dyck, Rosella Toews, Vernon Toews, Victor Neufeld, Peter Dirks and Hugh McDiarmid.

Collegiate enrolment passed the 100 mark in 1940 and the following year additional space was added to the school to accommodate students in the general shop course. Only 11 years after its construction, the collegiate began to burst at the seams with the addition of junior high students. In the fall of 1946, work began on a new elementary school. In February the following year, grades five and six moved into the partially-finished school to provide more space in the high school.

An article in the *Carillon News* in February

boasted of the six large classrooms, many electric lights and impressive auditorium and stage facilities. The school also featured two doors for every classroom, the article said. Members of the school board then would have thought it impossible that they would have to build another new school just six years later as elementary enrolment swelled beyond expectations with the addition of many pupils who lived just outside the Town of Steinbach. By this time, 19 teachers were on staff in the community's three schools with a total enrolment of nearly 500.

By 1948, the collegiate was becoming a highly organized little community within the community as a total of 242 students were now enrolled in grades seven to 12.

A student council had been formed for some time and in addition to exercising students in self government, parliamentary procedure and attitudes of responsibility, it gave them an opportunity to work on such collective projects as the yearbook, school newspaper and the annual spring play. Development of spiritual and moral values was still greatly stressed as well by educators who felt that each day should be begun with religious exercises. This practice was continued for a long time though in recent years it has lost considerable popularity among students and teachers.

Parents' interest in education took new turns just before 1950 and increased to the point where a home and school organization was formed on February 9, 1949. This forerunner of the modern PTA organizations recognized the need for involvement between parents and teachers. Founders of the organization stressed that there be close harmony between home and school.

Graduations were always one of the highlights of the year as everyone donned their best to honor the graduates for their achievement. In 1947, for example, 17 boys and seven girls received their high school diplomas from principal A. M. Rempel. That year Bill Schroeder won the Governor General medal for scholastic achievement and Elmer Reimer, who in 1968 was the NDP candidate for La Verendrye in the provincial election, delivered the valedictory address.

Despite the many advancements made in Steinbach's educational system, the schools still came under fire from various sectors, fre-

quently from conservative religious speakers. In a 1950 address at the Emmanuel Mission Church in Steinbach. David F. Siemens, a teacher at the local Bible academy, described what he called "The curse of modern education." Criticizing what he believed to be creeping materialism in local schools, Mr. Siemens said children were being misled by teachings which went contrary to the Bible. He called upon parents to press for changes in the curriculum which he said "were rotten with evolution" and to return to more Bible-oriented courses.

Mr. Siemens' text was published in the *Carillon News* and the following week a rural teacher struck back at the address in defense of the courses taught at the time. Other objections to the schools took different forms. Early in 1949 a Steinbach father was fined \$15 for failing to send his son to school for the required number of days. He had been warned repeatedly and finally authorities from the Department of Education brought down the law. He was given the alternative of 10 days in jail.

Trustees reject bargaining

The annual salary negotiations between teachers and trustees did not always exist and

perhaps many trustees even now wish they had never been instigated. Prior to the early 1950's, no such negotiations existed as annual teacher salaries were usually agreed upon in an air of congeniality. But by 1951 teachers were beginning to make demands which frightened many trustees. The membership of teachers in the Manitoba Teachers' Society, to which many local teachers belonged, was regarded suspiciously by board members since they looked at the Society as a labor union. At a joint meeting of Mennonite trustees from all over southeastern Manitoba in February of 1951, trustees put their heads together to see what could be done in view of the alarming demands made by teachers, demands which included collective bargaining rights. Trustees did agree, though, that teachers should be able to enjoy all the amenities of modern life such as "drive a car and go to town once in a while and spend a few dollars."

Present day teachers would no doubt scoff at salary arrangements made at that time which certainly backed a popular saying that nobody went into teaching to get rich. As an example, a married teacher with a university degree and a class of 35 students was entitled to an annual salary of \$1,700.

On March 20, 1954 Steinbach ratepayers gave their local school board a solid go-ahead for



Sodturning ceremonies for the town's fourth school, to be named Elmdale, were held in the spring of 1954. Ratepayers of the town had earlier indicated their approval by over 20 to one. The school was completed in less than six months at a cost of \$130,000 and officially opened on September 25, 1954. The new building held 10 classrooms and an auditorium. In the photo, left to right are: Dick Harder, construction foreman for contractor F. W. Sawatsky, trustees William P. Wiebe, Art Rempel, Sebastian Rieger and Gerhard S. Derksen, board chairman. At right is Ed J. Friesen, trustee.

construction of the town's fourth school, to be named Elmdale. In the late 1940's and early 1950's a new crop of youngsters threatened to literally burst some of the elementary classrooms and it was clear that additional classroom space was needed. Though only 20 per cent of local residents cast their ballot, the vote carried better than 20 to one in favor of a new school. Trustees were thus forced to abandon their hopes of waiting with construction of a fourth school until the collegiate was paid for.

September 25, 1954 saw the official opening of the new 10-classroom school built for the moderate sum of \$130,000 and completed in less than six months. A crowd of over 400 inspected the building that day and saw, among other modern features, doors which did not obstruct hallway space even when opened. The school even boasted separate washrooms for kindergarten pupils and built-in shelves in every classroom. (Kindergarten classes had been taught in Steinbach since 1959 by Miss Connie Barkman, now Mrs. Jac. Ketler.)

The struggle to keep the small school districts

The organization of many small school districts into a large unitary division such as exists today became a long painful process lasting eight years and requiring four trips to the polls by rate-payers in Hanover Division. Discussions about unification of the collegiate districts into one division began as early as 1957 when the provincial government offered increased grants to centralized school areas. Trustees, teachers and parents alike criticized the suggestions at first, particularly parents from rural areas who predicted correctly that centralization would eventually spell doom for their small community schools. In January of 1959, Premier Duff Roblin visited Steinbach to promote large divisions, pointing out especially the more generous grants Hanover would receive if they adopted centralization.

The outcome of a public referendum on April 27 that year shocked promoters of the unitary collegiate division plan. Hanover was one of only four out of 36 divisions in the province who turned down the plan. (It is significant that at least one of the other divisions oppos-

ing unification also had a heavy Mennonite population.)

The negative vote left local trustees not quite knowing what to do. They felt they were unable to meet the new teachers' salary plan under the district grant structure yet, on the other hand, they were not eligible for increased grants. Trustees felt the negative vote by ratepayers was not of political significance; they agreed the plan was not properly advertised and also that a further referendum would surely turn out differently.

Premier Roblin returned to Steinbach in May, his second visit in five months, and promised another vote would be held if a local petition containing at least 25 per cent of the eligible voters' names could be prepared. The petition was easily received and in November that year voters proved that trustees had correctly guessed their opinions several months earlier. The unitary collegiate scheme passed with nearly a two-to-one margin. Notable opposition was registered in Blumenort where only three people voted yes.

At the same time, a new board of seven trustees was elected to administer all high schools in the area. It consisted of John Hildebrand, Isaac J. Braun, Albert Loewen, Sebastian Rieger, Jacob Martens, Ben S. Fast and Jac. U. Klassen. The new board wasted no time in drawing up a building program for new colleges at Steinbach, Grunthal, Niverville and Landmark. These new facilities were made necessary since high school enrolment that year jumped by over 12 per cent.

Steinbach Collegiate goes up

"Their first sight of the new edifice knocked their breath out", the *Carillon News* said in its January 5, 1962 edition describing the reaction of pupils as they entered Steinbach's new half-million-dollar collegiate for the first time. The gleaming concrete and glass structure had been completed in just eight months by "Old Fussy" John Taubensee of Winnipeg who had submitted the lowest of seven bids in June the previous year.

Most people were amazed at the grandeur of the new structure while others wondered how long it would take to pay for it. One farmer passing the new school on opening day was

heard to remark that his great grandchildren would still be paying for the school. The opening of Steinbach Collegiate followed shortly after Grunthal received a new high school.

High schools at Niverville and Landmark were also built around this time.

The division had begun to feel the impact of a unitary administration yet at the same time



Sodturning ceremonies for Steinbach's new \$½ million collegiate were held in the early summer of 1961. The spade was held by board chairman Sebastian Rieger. Among those attending the ceremony beside Mr Rieger are H. P. Friesen, L. A. Barkman, Albert Loewen, Cornie Loewen, Art Rempel, Ken Jasper, inspector of schools, John Hildebrand and J. K. Schellenberg. The school was completed in January the following year.

—Carillon News photo



A seven-man board of trustees elected in 1960 became the first unitary board in Hanover Division. The high school boards unified that year but unification of all the elementary boards did not take place until nearly eight years later. In back row, left to right are: Jac. U. Klassen, Steinbach; John K. Schellenberg, secretary-treasurer; Jac Martens, Grunthal and John Hildebrand, Landmark. Front row, left to right are Albert Loewen, Steinbach; Isaac Braun, Niverville; Ben Fast, Kleefeld and Sebastian Rieger, Steinbach.

—photo courtesy Seb. Rieger

demanding that more and more students spend a greater time each day riding school buses as all high school students attended at four schools.

One year after completion of the high school, ratepayers were again asked to approve another school. They did so in May with a large majority but only 18 per cent of eligible voters took the time to cast their ballots. In September, 1963, A. K. Penner and Sons of Blumenort were awarded the contract to build the \$206,000 Woodlawn School in the eastern section of Steinbach. The 14-classroom elementary school was the last new educational structure to be built in Hanover Division for the next eight

years. Most larger schools did, however, undergo expansion with addition of classrooms and in some cases auditoriums as yearly enrolment increases were noted.

By 1963, 3,063 pupils were enrolled in elementary classes in Hanover Division with an additional 681 in high schools. However, costs were jumping ahead of enrolment figures and the financing of education became a by-word of concern for many people. Particularly those living in small school districts resented paying education levies since some of them could already see what was ultimately going to be the fate of their small school districts.



The new and present Steinbach Collegiate built in 1961 at a cost of approximately one-half million dollars.

—Carillon News photo

The end of an era

Sunday, July 13, 1964 was one of those days when nothing could have marred the magic of a once-in-a-lifetime reunion as 44 of the 126 pupils who studied at Kornelsen School during its first year of operation reunited for a last look at the 50-year-old institution. Fifty-six were unable to attend while the remaining 26 had died over the years. Highlight of the reunion was the appearance of one of the school's three original teachers, H. S. Rempel.

The old school building was torn down later in the summer as Steinbach town council got on with the business of building a new civic centre. But even though the old school died that summer, the Kornelsen name lived on. The old school, which had become a junior high school when the new collegiate was opened, was named Kornelsen School in honor of the local name most famous for its teaching personalities.

The last hurdle

But education in Hanover and in general the East Reserve had to pass one more hurdle before the picture assumed the aspects it does in 1971. In 1967 the Manitoba government enacted a piece of legislation which shortly became a household word and was known mostly as Bill 16. Few understood exactly what it meant and the less people knew about its provisions, the more they seemed opposed to it. As did their fathers in 1918 when the government threatened to abolish Mennonite private schools, the residents of the small rural areas did all they could to prevent what they considered the greatest threat ever posed to the education of their children.

What Bill 16 sought to bring about was that all school districts in a certain area should be combined into what became known as a unitary division. The government's reason for such a proposal was that an all-round better

education could be provided if they attended larger, centralized schools located in the centres of a divisional area. While few people were opposed to better education on principle, they objected loudly to the methods necessary for implementation of such a program.

The rural dwellers loathed to see their small district schools disappear and they were frankly skeptical when the government told them the unitary plan would take less money out of their pockets.

Public meetings dealing with various aspects of unitary divisions became the order of the day as residents of many communities sought to combine their objections. Informed speakers lectured across the entire area while the Department of Education placed large weekly ads in the *Carillon News* depicting the many advantages students and taxpayers would enjoy if they accepted Bill 16.

The government did not force school districts to become unitary—the whole issue was to be decided by a public referendum—but they made it nearly impossible for small school districts to finance their school operations while at the same time offering increased operational grants under the new proposal foundation grant scheme. So in a sense, the hand of the small district board was being forced.

But all efforts of those promoting the unitary division failed when in mid-March voters turned down the new scheme. Again, as in 1959 during a similar referendum, the rural voters turned the tide of the issue. However, their victory was short-lived as the government announced that Hanover electors would be given another opportunity to show their feelings on the unitary plan.

By November that year, petitions asking for another vote had been duly signed and December 15 was set as the date for a second referendum. In the meantime, groups opposing the government's suggestions rallied their forces and decided to hold a public meeting in the Steinbach Collegiate auditorium where, as they put it, the "real facts," of the forthcoming referendum would be presented to ratepayers.

The public meeting failed, largely because the division disallowed the group the use of the auditorium after a number of items of correspondence had passed between the group from New Bothwell and division board mem-

bers. "The delay and final refusal left the anti-unitary group furious and remarks about bureaucratic control and dictatorship were a dime a dozen," commented the *Carillon News* on November 30. The fight was soon destined to be over but the bad feelings created still exist and may not be resolved for a number of years.

Eight single votes was all that separated a unitary Hanover Division from a single district area on December 15, 1967 when 1,802 ratepayers voted for acceptance of Bill 16 for their areas. Opponents of the unitary concept had lost the war but they waged one more battle when two weeks later several residents in the division brought alleged voting irregularities to the attention of the government. A court hearing followed in February in which all three charges brought forth were dismissed by County Court Judge L. H. Benard. The matter was officially settled; Hanover had become unitary and was going to remain so.

It must be noted as an afterthought to the hotly-disputed unitary plan that divisions in Manitoba with high concentrations of Mennonite settlements were the ones voicing strongest opposition to centralization of educational institutions and subsequent abolition of small village schools. The times were different but Mennonite sentiment to loss of local control and the resulting assimilation of groups and cultures ran nearly as strongly in 1967 as in the stormy private versus public school issue shortly after the turn of the century. Of considerable significance is the fact that that area in the West Reserve where homesteaders fought with everything at their disposal to retain their private schools has until today defied all efforts at unification. Rhineland ratepayers in the Altona area rejected twice in one year a proposal to merge their school districts into one consolidated division.

Small schools doomed

The impact of the new unitary division and its 10-member board was soon felt. Hardest hit were the small rural schools whose abolition was one of the first items on the board's agenda. By the summer of 1968, one-room schooling was gone forever as 11 of these little institutions closed their doors permanently at the end of the term. Many others were also slated

to close at the end of the 1971 term as the board consolidated schools in efforts to achieve graded classrooms throughout the division.

Eventually only some half dozen communities in the division will have schools. Though many rural parents have had few objections to seeing their older children sent to larger schools, most have indicated strongly they would like to keep grades one to six in their local communities. Trustees have generally been in agreement to retain as many local elementary schools as possible but new building requirements set by the Department of Education are making this more difficult every year.

Recent developments

The latest developments in education have pointed to further centralization. The first of these developments was unveiled when the Local Government Boundaries Commission, appointed in 1967 to study municipal and school division operations, recommended in September of 1969 that Hanover and Seine River divisions be merged. This suggestion was literally shouted down at a large public meeting the same month as citizens of both divisions loudly protested such a union which would bring two distinct ethnic groups under one administration. Commission chairman Robert Smellie then told people the recommendations would be put under further review.

A further hint of centralization was heard early in 1970 when regional school boards were suggested by the provincial government. Implementation of such proposals could see one school board administering education in all of southeastern Manitoba, a far cry from the many school districts only a dozen years ago. These suggestions have, however, been strongly rejected by trustees and teachers alike and it is not likely any action along these lines will be taken for some time.

In the fall of 1970, Hanover Division officials received word that a regional secondary school would be built in Steinbach. A school of this type would offer both academic and vocational subjects and would be capable of instructing 1,000 students in grades 10, 11 and 12. This school will not be operational until some time

in 1972 and is being built on a scale never before seen in southeastern Manitoba. It will cost nearly \$3 million and have a total area greater than 100 average-sized houses. For its vocational instruction, it is expected to draw students from nearly all school divisions in the Southeast.

But behind all the size, grandeur and complexity of modern education lie the fantastic costs of hiring qualified teachers, use of more sophisticated equipment and maintenance of modern and, in some cases air-conditioned school buildings. The Hanover School Division is currently Steinbach's largest spender with a budget this year of over \$2.5 million. Though it could be argued that the future of the community's children lies at the mercy of education and its direction, the ever-spiralling costs are causing many to ask whether a ceiling on expenditures can ever be established. For while the government's foundation grant was originally intended to cover nearly all costs of education, trustees have found that their best efforts at economizing aren't good enough. Last year Hanover Division, considered to be operating more economically than most divisions, had to levy over 17 mills on municipal assessment in order to balance its budget. To date, the government has not basically altered its foundation grant despite the fact that many such requests have been made.

But the worst of it all to many parents is the fact that they can't understand some of the homework that even their elementary school children are bringing home. Changes in the curriculum have been so rapid in recent years that no parent can be expected to keep up with his child's studies. New mathematics, as foreign as Greek to many parents, open-area classrooms, continuous progress, up-graded classroom situations and abolition of traditional testing methods have combined to leave most taxpayers in a total void on matters of education. One point, however, is painfully clear to them—they are paying for it handsomely and relief is apparently out of sight.

The bright side of today's educational system is not unworthy of mention. Whereas schools of yesterday were geared only to the average student, the schools of the 70's are trying to reach everybody, the genius, the mediocre student and the slow learner. It cannot

be denied that our concentrated efforts at giving everyone equal opportunities for education are going to have positive results. Ten years ago little lay in store for the unwilling student who couldn't pass an academic and university-oriented high school program. Tomorrow's comprehensive school will enable a young man or woman to develop a career skill in the same

building as those who aspire toward a college education.

"The role of technical and vocational training in Manitoba must be one of the proudest accomplishments of our educational system in recent years, former Education Minister Donald Craik told the provincial legislature in 1968.

The private school problem and the trek to Paraguay

For the Mennonite settlers in the East Reserve the first great break with the Canadian government occurred in 1919 when they discovered to their dismay that the agreements with the government regarding their own schools had actually never existed. The written charter given the delegates in July 23, 1873, contained the school clause which read: "The fullest privilege of exercising their

religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites, without any kind of molestation and restriction whatever; and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools."

When prosecutions were launched against certain Mennonites in 1919 for not sending their children to the public schools, this charter was brought up but was declared illegal by



The Steinbach local of the Manitoba Teachers Federation was organized January 30, 1926. J. G. Toews was president, J. G. Kornelsen, vice-president and A. P. Salemka secretary. Thirty-one years after its formation, on May 31, 1957, an anniversary was held in honor of the teachers who helped form the Steinbach local. In attendance were the following. Back row, left to right: G. G. Reimer, P. J. B. Reimer, Jacob Rempel, C. G. Unruh, Seb Rieger, Richard Reimer and A. A. Toews. Centre row: Mrs. John C. Reimer, Mrs. Jacob Rempel, Mrs. Jacob Toews, Miss Agnes Wiebe, Mrs. Seb Rieger and Mrs. Neil Wiebe. Front row: P. S. Guenther, George K. Reimer, Rev. A. P. Salemka, John C. Reimer and C. L. Toews.

—Carillon News photo



This photo shows teachers of Hanover Division at one of their informal "locals." The date this picture was taken cannot be definitely determined but it may have been in the early 1950's. Among the teachers in the photo are P. S. Guenther, left front; George Neufeld, at left; John Peters, left centre; Jac Wedel, to left of Mr. Peters, and the late Nicholas Toews, standing at right.

—Carillon News photo

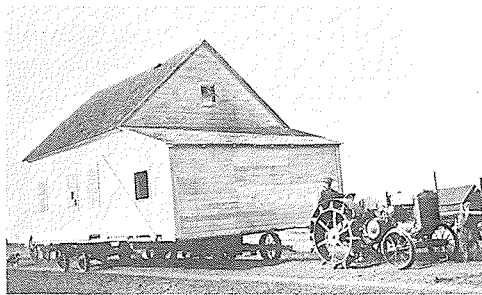


In February of 1960, Steinbach Collegiate received a set of Encyclopedia Britannica from the publisher who distributed some 1,600 sets in high schools across the country. Posing with the new volumes were principal J. J. Peters and board chairman Sebastian Rieger. The portrait on the wall is that of J. G. Kornelsen, teacher in Steinbach for many years.

—Carillon News photo



The first group of 350 Mennonites left for Paraguay on Nov. 23, 1926 after boarding the train at Carey, west of St. Pierre. This photo shows the crowds at the station while the emigrants boarded the train.



Around 1919 when the Manitoba government introduced compulsory education, the private schools had to go. The Chortitz private school building was bought by the National Trust and moved to Bergthal in SW¼ 13-7-5 and converted into a residence. The building is still standing one mile east and one and one-half miles north of Chortitz.

—photo courtesy Jac P. Rempel

the Court of Appeal. The Court referred to an Order-in-Council made on August 13, 1873, exactly three weeks after the delegates were in Ottawa and still on their way back to Russia to report to their brethren on the charter they were holding in their hands. Though they were not aware of it the charter had been changed to read: "The fullest privileges of exercising their religious principles; and educating their children in schools as provided by the law."

But actually, some agitation to move out of the country had already started in 1912, when the village of Steinbach, thanks to its education-

mindful teachers, asked for, and was granted, a provincial school. Provincial authorities had for some time eyed with apprehension the standards of education in the Mennonite settlement which consisted of a three-year course of primer, catechism and Bible, with some arithmetic. The fact that Steinbach (and a little later a few other districts) broke away from what the orthodox element considered their most prized possession — their own private schools — indicated to authorities that there was a chink in the armour and they were quick to breach it further by various means. Finally, when World War I came along, officials had further excuses for disallowing these private schools because they taught the German language.

The Mennonites, to whom the privilege of having their own schools was given as an inducement to settle here 50 years previous now fought bitterly to maintain this right. Many refused to send their children to the public schools even though they were fined again and again until, in some instances, every cow on the farm had been sold to pay the fines. Others, who lived close to school, read the School Act and found that school attendance was not compulsory for settlers living more than five miles from school. They promptly left their farms and bought small holdings further into the bush. At the same time, less determined individuals began to accept the public schools as inevitable.

Thus the large settlement of Mennonites in the area known as the East Reserve split on the all-important question of school attendance and in the spring of 1920 the "Trekkers" as those advocating a move were to be known, sent delegates to Paraguay for the purpose of scouting out the country, and if feasible, striking an agreement of settlement with the government. That Department of Education officials were also suffering frayed nerves can be gauged from the school naming at Grunthal. This school, one of the last to relinquish its "private" claims, when taken over by the province, was promptly named Aldershot School — in due reference to the pacifist Mennonites whom it was to serve.

In the fall of the same year the delegates returned from Paraguay, bubbling over with enthusiasm of what they had seen. The government there was also prepared to give the new settlers almost unheard of privileges for the purpose of inducing new settlers to move in.

"Mennonites and other pacifist sects that have been looking for a fruitful land of moderate climate, have now found where people can live according to the dictates of their conscience, develop their own schools and churches and are invited to have this opportunity in the neutral state of Paraguay" crowed a neatly printed brochure that made its appearance among the Mennonites as soon as the delegates were back. It also showed pictures of the delegates wading through deep grass in the Chaco which was to be the future home of these people. The brochure did not say, and the delegates did not discover it until too late, that this grass was known as "salt grass" and not edible for cattle.

"One thing that I fear more than anything else," one of the delegates is said to have said, "is that our people will grow rich too quickly in the new land, and that it will make them haughty and love the things of this world."

That, the cynics said, caught on with the trekkers and the agitation to move became almost a religious crusade.

Also helping along was Don Jose Casada, a man who owned millions of acres of the semi-arid Chaco land which the Mennonites later were to call their home. He thought it might be worth his while to visit these Manitobans

who were looking for "fruitful" land and spoke at many meetings in the churches. Don Jose Casada was a man who had made his stake in Paraguay and he was just about to make a little more.

Finally, in the summer of 1926, the big task of mobilizing the more than 1,500 trekkers, disposing of their chattles and liquidating their debts (it was a church rule that there should be no debts left in Manitoba) was completed. The land company of which Don Jose Casada was part, sold to the Mennonites some 138,000 acres of Chaco land at five dollars an acre and took in trade the land of the Manitoba Mennonites at a price of approximately \$10 per acre. But the balance thus owing to some of the trekkers was not paid out in cash. The zeal of the trekkers was such that they agreed to pay this surplus into a community fund which paid the fares and debts of the destitute. Since the whole movement was more of a religious crusade than a business proposition, it was generally agreed that everybody would start out on an equal footing in the new promised land. They did — almost penniless.

The first group left Carey Nov. 23, 1926

Finally on November 23 the first group of 350 was ready to leave. The little village of Carey overflowed with buggies, Model T's and wagons as friends and relatives came to see the trekkers off. The farewell scenes were touching as families were torn apart, budding romances broken up. Some went against their will, as one man who came back related: "I still curse myself that I did not follow my urge to run out into the field at Carey just before the train left. But I was only 14 and at the last moment reboarded the train as it started to move ahead. But the day I landed in Paraguay I made plans to return. It took me five years but I made it."

Of the approximately 1,756 Mennonites (the majority from the West Reserve) who left for Paraguay, 147 died on reaching their destination, not being used to the extreme heat. A few returned immediately, never viewing the Grand Chaco where they had bought land.

Aside from those going to South America,

whole villages from Manitoba and Saskatchewan also wended their way southward to Mexico.

Beginning around 1964, many of those Paraguayan Mennonites who had left here in one of the two major migrations, began returning to Manitoba. Between June 1964 and June 1965 some 50 families, some with as many as 10 children, had settled in the Steinbach - Grunthal - Niverville area.

Most of those returning had been only teenagers or children when they left.

Typical, perhaps, of these people was John Reimer of New Bothwell who came back in April, 1965 with seven of his nine children.

Mr Reimer was just 12 years old when he left with his parents from Gretna, Manitoba in late 1926. He had spent all the intervening 38 years in Colony Menno in the Paraguayan Chaco, a semi-arid strip of country given the Mennonites for settlement purposes.

Asked why he returned to Canada, Mr

Reimer said he had several reasons. "In the first place I am a Canadian. I have never forgotten this and I never really felt at home in Paraguay. During the 38 years our colony existed there, we made relatively little progress. We kept ourselves isolated from the rest of the country and had no ties with the rest of the country or the government. Our colony management tended to drift more and more away from democratic ideals and this wasn't good for our growing generation.

"It caused dissatisfaction and internal strife in the colony. As a group the colony did not support progress in education and the young people were not educated to govern themselves or to think for themselves. Anyone who did much deep thinking got the feeling that intelligence was a quality not too much wanted there."

In Paraguay Mr Reimer was for many years a cotton farmer and more recently, a rancher. By Paraguayan standards he was well off. He



The dramatic photo taken near the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay typified the hardships many of the settlers endured in their struggles for a new life in a strange and frightening world. This photo also appeared in Dr. Walter Quirings' picture book on Mennonite settlement in Paraguay entitled "Im Schweisse Deines Angesichts".

was able to finance his own family's return to Canada and even to assist a couple of other families, while a majority of those returning have had to borrow passage money.

"We didn't see any future for our children in the Chaco," Mr Reimer told the *Carillon News* at the time. "Nor was there much future for the colony as a whole. Machinery for industry was at a prohibitive price and the arable land was becoming worn out and unproductive. Fertilizer was so expensive as to make it financially impossible to buy."

Asked whether his own view expressed those of other returning Paraguayans, Mr Reimer said he felt sure that it did. He added that he didn't doubt that at least half of those still in Paraguay would like to return to Canada too, but some because of religious reasons and others for financial reason couldn't get up the nerve or raise the funds to try it.

Children born in Paraguay of Canadian parents, remain Canadian citizens through their 23rd year. At the age of 24, unless they exercise their right to return to Canada, they automatically become Paraguayan citizens.

"For my part, I'm glad that I'm back," Mr. Reimer said. "Canada is still home to me, and I intend to die there. I never intend to go back to Paraguay."

1968 saw many more families arrive in Manitoba from Paraguay. Though figures are nearly impossible to verify, 50 families as a minimum came over to start new lives in that year.

As others before them, they settled at Steinbach, Grunthal, Niverville and even Winnipeg. Employment for practically all was found quickly, usually in killing plants or factories. Most came prepared to work hard at menial labor and adjustment was not difficult.

The second trek—1948

The second trek out of Canada by the Mennonites of both reserves was different from the first in that the people were not leaving because of government interference in school or other affairs.

Though the Mennonites had not been forced to bear arms in either the first or second World Wars, many of the young men had joined up in World War II. This, plus the import

of cars, radios, movies and other "worldly" things made the Mennonite elders decide to flee rather than face assimilation.

The Mennonites were leaving with the hope that the Paraguayan government would adhere to its promises of granting the Mennonites freedom of religion, pertaining especially to the non-resistance tenets of their faith; freedom to control their own schools in their own language; freedom to live a simple and secluded life within their own community; something quite impossible in the hustling, bustling 20th century in Canada. They fully realized the hardships into which they were heading, but this they did gladly, believing that the full life they enjoyed here was not contributing to their spiritual welfare but rather making them forget their Diety and centering thoughts on themselves and material goods.

Agreements with the Paraguay government were struck in 1946 after three delegates of the Chortitz and Sommerfelder Church spent some time looking over the land and bringing their proposition to that government. If it had not been for a shortage of shipping space, the first contingent would have moved out in the fall of 1947.

Approximately 1,700 of the conservative "Kanadier" Mennonites left Manitoba for Paraguay in June, 1948.

About 450 Mennonites, last of the group going, boarded a special C.P.R. train at Niverville Wednesday, June 23 on the first lap of their long journey. Other groups left from Winnipeg, Letellier and Plum Coulee in Manitoba, and one group came from the Herbert, Saskatchewan district. All boarded the dutch steamer Volendam which took them straight to Buenos Aires, Argentina. From there some went by rail, others by river boat, to Villerica, Paraguay, their point of disembarkation. From there they moved along a new 65 mile road just recently built by the Paraguay government in an easterly direction to arrive at the site where the new Mennonite colony was located.

Heartbreaking scenes marked their departure. A young teenage girl, weeping and sobbing, was helped onto the train. A young man fainted after bidding farewell to parents, brothers and sisters. He was the only one to remain in Canada. In the huge crowds of

friends and relatives who had come out for the last farewell, there was hardly an eye that was tearless.

Reports on the difficulties the Mennonites suffered in Paraguay in the first few years came from many sources.

In an article in a February or March, 1951 issue of *Macleans* magazine, W. O. Mitchell wrote that some of the Mennonites were living in constant fear of starvation, insect plagues, strange diseases and death in "the green hell that was to have been a promised land."

In an article "The Tragic Trek of the Mennonites," Mitchell told in detail the experiences of one family among 1,700 would-be colonists who travelled three years previously to tropical South America "to build a vale of happiness."

John Wiebe, who owned a farm at Horn-dean, Manitoba joined the trek with his wife and six children. After more than 18 months they came back to Canada to Steinbach, but disease and hunger had killed two of their children and they had lost their life's savings. Seven hundred others also returned.

In Paraguay, Mitchell wrote in 1951, the Mennonites did not find what they sought "a new community on fertile soil where they could have freedom of education and religion and a haven from war. They found instead a country torn by revolution, a waste of swamp and uncleared jungle that could not support them.

"They found frightening jungle diseases and infections which they never learned to combat because they were never diagnosed. Three-year-old Agnes Wiebe died during the trek and her parents still do not know the name of the disease that killed her." In one three-month period, Mitchell wrote, disease killed a child a day. Many of the women contracted jungle sores, an infection

which ate into the flesh of their legs. Mrs Wiebe still had one of these cankerous sores when she returned.

Their neighbours "lived daily by violence. In towns and cities the people walked the streets armed with machete, dagger and revolvers . . .

"The standards of living among the population were appallingly low"; the lepers crawled the streets in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay.

When they reached the interior where they had bought land for their colony, they found that the climate and land would not support the crops they had planned. Potatoes, flax, corn produced mammoth plants, but no fruit or seeds.

"Those with money to buy supplies and have them hauled in and those who will not admit the trek was ill-fated have stayed," Mitchell writes. "It is particularly hard on those without money, forced to live off the land that will raise only tobacco, sugar cane, peanuts and kaffir corn for chicken feed. These people know starvation."

J. C. Braun of Plum Coulee, Manitoba, a merchant who joined the trek, lost \$50,000 moving his entire clan to South America by plane and trying to settle there. He came back, "but many are trapped because they haven't the funds to return," said Mitchell.

* * *

Despite the picture of tragedy and despair that Mitchell and the returning Mennonites painted of the conditions of Paraguay, thousand chose to stay. They made a tremendous contribution to that country's economy by building communities where there was only jungle before and helping to civilize Indian tribes that had never before experienced kindness from white people.

19. Blumenort was founded in 1874

The history of the Blumenort district dates back to 1874, the year when the first Mennonites came to Manitoba. As was customary in those days, the settlement began as a farm village and Blumenort was one of only two villages (the other was Bergfeld) in the East Reserve that had houses on both sides of the street.

The old Blumenort village, founded by **Kleine Gemeinde** settlers, was located a mile and a half south of the present village on Section 22, Township 7 and Range 6 east. The first settlers lived in semlins which were shelters constructed by digging holes in the ground and building up walls of sod. Wooden floors in these crude homes were a luxury but a schoolhouse with a floor was set up within half a year.

Though there were 24 farm owners at Blumenort to begin with, approximately six families moved out to establish a new village, Neuanlage, southwest of Blumenort in 1876 and so, by 1878, there were 18 farm owners in Blumenort.

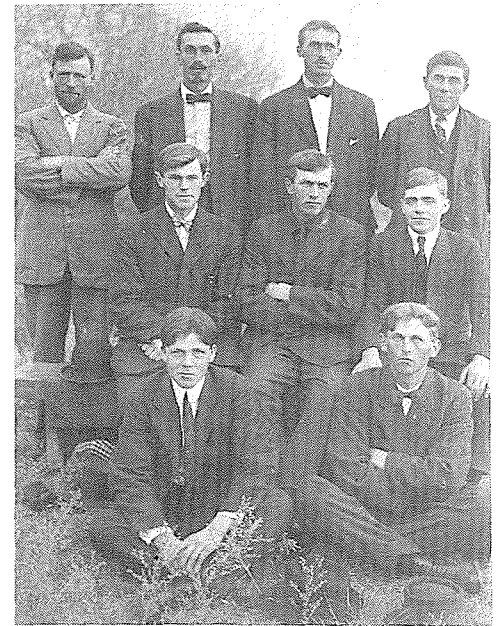
The community grew. In the way of services there was, first of all, Abraham R. Reimer who opened his blacksmith shop in 1874 and ran his business until his death in 1891 when Klaas R. Reimer took over.

—Because storekeeping was frowned upon as an improper occupation for a Mennonite, necessary goods were usually purchased at Winnipeg or the Hudson's Bay Store at Ste. Anne though later, after Klaas Reimer began selling goods at Steinbach in 1877, trade was also carried on there.

Blumenort didn't have any store until around 1896 when John R. Reimer began stocking a limited quantity of general merchandise in part of his home. He died in 1902 and his widow carried on with the small business for about a year after that.

A custom grain-crushing service started in the 1880's by two brothers, Peter B. and John B. Toews who had a building in the south side of the street in which to carry on their trade. They also ran a sawmill on the same yard.

The old Blumenort village began breaking up around 1904 and there were several reasons for this, among them the lack of land. Sons of the first settlers were not content to work for their fathers and the original farms could be divided only so many times. In 1904 some families moved out to the Greenland



Young men from the Greenland area around 1911 - 1912. Front row: Henry Penner, John T. Toews. Centre: Cornelius Toews, Jacob Toews and man unknown. Back row: Peter G. Toews, Peter T. Toews, Neil? Toews and Peter X. Friesen.

—photo courtesy K. R. Barkman

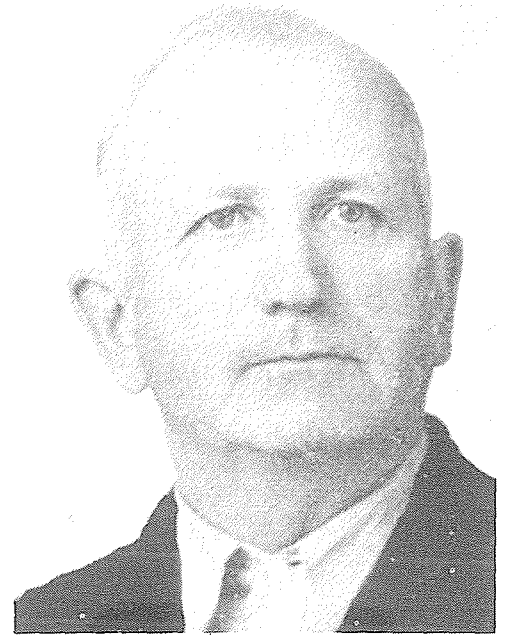
area which till then had been used for making hay.

Even more important, some farmers dissatisfied with the farm village system began moving out of town and onto their farms. The old village itself remained intact until 1910 but hardly a trace of it remains today.

The present Blumenort village site was once a cow pasture. The first residents were Cornelius R. Penner, Peter R. Penner, Corn. W. Brandt and Jacob G. Barkman and their families who settled on their farms along the road allowance a mile and a half north of the old village around 1910 when the farm village broke up.

Though it was difficult to develop any kind of trade centre with Steinbach, the capital of the East Reserve, only a few miles away, the Blumenort area was situated in the centre of some of the best farmland in the Reserve and became quite thickly settled.

The cheese factory played an important role in the area. It was first built in 1892 by Klaas W. Reimer and shut down around 1920



David P. Reimer, Blumenort, elder of the EMC church, 1948-1962.



Peter P. Reimer, one-time leader of all the Kleine Gemeinde congregations—in Blumenort, Steinbach, Kleefeld and Prairie Rose. Mr Reimer divided the church into self-controlled districts with individual church leaders. After fulfilling this mission he led his group to Mexico.

when prices in the province fell and factories closed down all over. Blumenort had a skimming station where milk was separated as early as 1914.

The depression brought the cheese factory back to Blumenort in 1932. Money was so scarce that the organizers started with \$5.00 shares of which \$2.50 was cash and the remainder earned in labor.

A unique revolving shareholding system was invented by Ben L. Reimer and Isaac P. Loewen. A certain amount of money, say five cents for every 100 pounds of milk shipped during one year, was held back as payment for the shipper's share. After five years the shipper's first year payments were paid back in cash.

Another development which was important to farmers for a while began around 1926 when Peter R. Penner began taking his neighbors' pigs to the Winnipeg market along with his own. This trade increased very rapidly and within a year Mr. Penner was shipping up to a carload a week by rail from Giroux.

After a while Mr. Penner began bringing home various merchandise from Winnipeg for resale. In 1930 he left the hog business and

remodelled his home to open a store. He took eggs in trade and after a few years, began grading them.

The poultry-killing and processing industry came about in 1947 when a few farmers became dissatisfied with the grades they were getting for their eggs.

The eggs were all shipped to Winnipeg for grading at that time and farmers felt the trucking and delivery service was inadequate and that the eggs deteriorated in quality on the trip with a consequent loss in profit to the producers. Besides that, the farmers had to wait a long time for their returns. A few of the local men had gained experience in the co-op way of doing business through their association with the Blumenort Co-op cheese factory which was then still operating and these men, consequently, conceived the idea of doing the same sort of thing with their eggs.

With \$700 as capital, the seven charter members made a loan, built a station 24 by 40 feet, bought some candling equipment and went into business. President Ben L. Reimer, who was one of the charter members, recalls: "We lost a little money the first year, broke even the second year, and made a little the third year."



The Manitoba Dairy and Poultry Co-op, formerly the Blumenort Co-op, has been one of the community's main industries for over 20 years.

—Carillon News photo

After the egg grading station was well underway, egg prices in general went up about one cent a dozen over what they had previously been in the area. In 1940 a 30 by 40 addition was built on as the co-op expanded into the feed business, thus helping members and providing more capital for later development.

The next sizeable expansion took place in 1953 when the old co-op cheese factory folded up due to its inability to compete with fluid milk market prices. That year the poultry co-op opened the former cheese factory as a killing plant, using the former steam plant to heat the water tank for scalding birds.

This building was roughly 40 by 80 feet in size. Only the killing was done in this plant and the birds were sold uneviscerated. Birds were still dipped by hand into the scalders although there was a semi-automatic plucker right from the start. During the second year of its operation (1954), the plant obtained a semi-automatic scalders. Capacity at first was just about 700 turkeys a day. Another addition in 1954 was a 36 by 40 foot enlargement of the feed storehouse. This also served as a truck garage.

Birds still had to be moved quickly as cooling facilities were limited and evisceration still impractical although small quantities of birds were eviscerated on a custom basis for shipment to eastern markets.

The original egg candling plant had started out with two employees, John Wohlge-muth as manager and one assistant. As business expanded, additional employees were taken on.

In the fall of 1956 plans were drawn up for the building of the present large factory on the corner at the No. 12 highway, the former premises having been located about half a mile to the west. Work got underway the following spring and the building was finished by Nov. 6, 1957 in time for the busy Christmas rush. Although the big plant had been in operation for over a year, the directors decided to wait until they could build a new egg grading station beside the poultry plant before holding the official opening in Nov. 1958.

In June, 1963, sixteen years after seven



A. K. Penner and Sons has enjoyed a phenomenal growth in the last 15 years. Employing up to 105 men in their peak seasons, the company is a major industry in not only the community but entire Steinbach area.

—Carillon News photo

charter members had raised \$700 to start the business, the \$300,000 firm was sold to Manitoba Dairy and Poultry Co-op. Shareholders voted 107-33 in favor of selling. The sale automatically dissolved the 380-member organization. Under the new ownership the company expanded until in 1970 it employed 100 people and processed up to 150,000 pounds in finished meat per day.

New business started in the post war years

The post-war economic boom also brought a whole group of other new businesses to Blumenort.

Aside from the old established P. J. Loewen firm with feed mill and general store, new businesses included the Southeast Turkey Hatchery, Bergmann Meat Products, Fast Brothers and A. K. Penner and Sons.

All have an interesting history and the A. K. Penner and Sons firm, for example, experienced a spectacular growth that few building companies could equal. Registered in 1956, they opened their own lumber yard in 1959. By 1971 the company had an annual timber limit of two million feet and employed 150 people at the peak building season. The firm became known for its large projects and tackled many difficult building projects in the Canadian north. In 1971 A. K. Penner and Sons built a 13-storey high-rise apartment building in Winnipeg.

Blumenort received its post office July 2, 1962 and the RM of Hanover approved a request from residents to organize the community as an unincorporated village the same year. At the same time the village was allowed to build an underground water reservoir and a pumphouse for fire protection purposes.

The long main street in the village was paved in 1968 and the population, in 1971, stood at 275. A 12-room school was built in 1971 and with good street planning the community has expanded considerably in recent years. Situated as it is on a ridge that creates a picturesque roll in the otherwise flat plain that marks the beginning of the prairies, the community's beautiful homes and gardens justify the name settlers gave the area nearly 100 years ago. Blumenort, translated, means place of flowers.

20. The Clearsprings settlers preceded the Mennonites

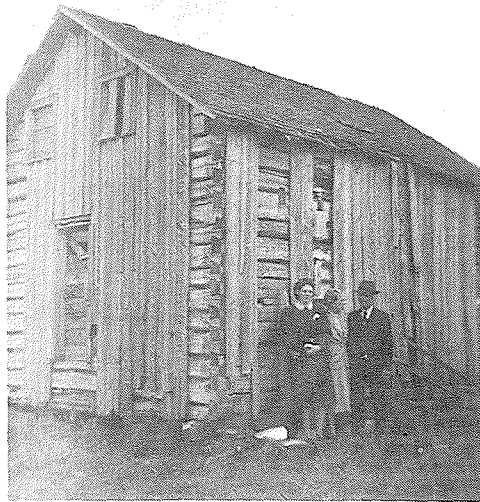
When the first Mennonites arrived in Manitoba in 1874 the only people who had preceded them to the area, aside from the Indians and Metis, were the Clearsprings settlers. These Scottish and Ontario farmers, who had begun arriving in 1870, had settled on land in the southeast part of township 7, in the northeastern corner of the Reserve.

Because this area had been withdrawn from the Reserve grant, there were no problems between the two groups. The Clearsprings settlers were sometimes hardpressed to understand the strange customs of the Mennonites (such as women doing the work

of men) but they accepted the Mennonites for the hardworking and peace-loving neighbors that they were and relations were excellent.

The Clearsprings settlers greatly assisted the Mennonites in building their homes and getting established and there was also co-operation in various farming activities, especially threshing. Because the Clearsprings settlers were also Protestant and because intercommunication with the Mennonites developed in trade, relations became much closer between these two groups than with the French.

Though the Clearsprings settlement is believed to have boasted as many as 30 to 40 families at one time, the population gradually declined as some of the settlers moved to areas with a larger concentration of English people and the Mennonites bought up these farms.



John Mack is believed to have been the first white settler to move to the Clearsprings district prior to 1870. Mr. Mack built a temporary home before this two-storey log house was constructed in 1870. The farm on which he lived was later to be known as the Alex McCaskell farm and is located 1½ miles east of the Clearsprings School.

—photo courtesy William Laing

Pioneers of Clearsprings and Giroux by Wm. Cohoe

In research concerning the early settlers of Clearsprings five pioneers appear to be worthy of special mention as being the first white settlers. **John Mack** is recorded, as near as I can determine, as the first white settler in what was later called Clearsprings. He is known to have been here before 1870, as a squatter, on the land later known as the Alex McCaskill farm.

Three names appear on the map as squatters. That of **John Mack**, **John Jemison** and **Thomas Rankin**. No other names appear in either Steinbach, Clearsprings or Ridgewood. Thomas Laing and his brother Wm. Laing are recorded, I understand, as homesteaders on the farm now known as the Stanger farm near Ste. Anne, as early as 1870. They did not like river

lots and consequently moved to near where their buildings now stand and homesteaded on the present farm in 1872. John Mack's second house is the old house now being used as a granary on the old Alex McCaskill farm.

For the **T. Rankin** and **J. Jemison** farms, I was not able to get more detailed records. Ed Laing still resides on and owns the original old T. Laing homestead of 1872. W. Laing was trustee in the Clearsprings school for about 30 years.

John Peterson should, I believe, be included with the first five names but I have no records previous to his homesteading S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 7-7-6 on September 23, 1872. He came to Manitoba in 1864 but where the intervening time was spent, except that he worked together with W. Stanger at Norway House Hudson Bay Post for several years, cannot be established.

Tom Slater came to Clearsprings in 1871, homesteaded on the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 14-7-6 in 1872. He sold the farm to T. Mooney in 1912 or 1913 and moved to Giroux where he lived the remainder of his life. T. Rankin settled in Clearsprings in 1871 and married Clementine Crawford in 1873. Mr Rankin died in 1908 and Mrs Rankin in 1927. They were survived by four sons and four daughters: Margaret (Mrs. Glover), Girtie (Mrs. McCallum), Cassie (Mrs. Crossley), Flossie (Mrs. Armstrong); Will, Tom, Howard and Edgar.

The next settlers to arrive were probably **Peter Keating** and **John Langill**. Peter Keating came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in the spring of 1872 and homesteaded on NW 10-7-6. He came by Red River boat. His son Jim claimed they did not use the tractor to break up the homestead, the humble ox getting preference.

John Langill came to Clearsprings as one of the next early settlers. The record shows him as entering for homestead March 31, 1873 on SE $\frac{1}{4}$ 10-7-6 which was patented May 3, 1878. John Langill was elected to Clearsprings first school board along with T. Rankin and Wm. Mooney Sr. John Langill owned one of the first threshers. It was powered by horse power on a tread mill and fed handfuls of grain at a time.

1874 to 1876 seem to have been the banner years for settlers. In these two years we have

no less than 19 settlers or homesteaders. They are as follows:

John Carlton, 1874. Not much is recorded of Mr. Carlton but it appears that he was the first to sell wheat outside the settlement. I believe he sold seed wheat in Winnipeg in the fall of 1876.

James Carlton came to Clearsprings in about 1874. He settled on the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ 15-6-7.

Tom Carlton came about the same time as John and James, homesteaded SE $\frac{1}{4}$ 2-6-7. **James Steel** was the first settler in the Ridgewood School district, later to be known as Ridgewood. He was elected as one of the first trustees to that school district and the first chairman. He served Ridgewood school district as trustee for nearly 30 years and was trustee and chairman of the school board when he died. He served on the Ste. Anne Council representing Ward Two for many years. His son, **James Steel Sr.**, later owned the old homestead SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 7-7-7E.

John Gorrie came to Clearsprings in 1874 and homesteaded the NW 30-7-7 in that year. He married Jannet Glover and lived on this farm until his death. His son Wm. Gorrie took over the old homestead until he sold out in the fall of 1946. John Gorrie was trustee of the Ridgewood school for many years; he also served as chairman for some time. He came to Canada from the Orkney Islands, Scotland, in the year 1871 as a lad of 16 years. He worked around Fort Garry (now Winnipeg) for three years before coming to Clearsprings.

James Glover came to Clearsprings in the year of 1874, first settled on the Stanger farm in June and later moved to the homestead NE 30-7-7, known as the Glover farm for three generations. He was one of the first councillors to represent Ward 2 in Ste. Anne Municipality. The homestead was taken over by his son John and later by his grandson James. Finally it was sold outside of the family in 1946. John Glover, son of James Glover Sr., also served as councillor for Ward 2 in Ste. Anne Municipality for several years. He was also trustee in Ridgewood for many years and secretary for 16 or 17 years. Mr. Glover came to Guelph, Ontario from Scotland in 1871; he arrived in Winnipeg in 1873.

J. J. Cohoe came to Clearsprings on the 530-mile Dawson trail with wife and three

children, John, May and Jeanne from Sobo, Ontario, in 1874. He homesteaded on SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 19-7-7 on March 22, 1875. Mr. Cohoe came to Manitoba by way of the Dawson Road with D. Fergeson, Peter and John McIntyre. He served as councillor for Ward 2 in the Ste. Anne Municipality and was one of the first trustees in the Ridgewood school district.

James Steel, Robert Mathews and J. J. Cohoe made up the first Ridgewood school board, Mr. Cohoe being the first secretary-treasurer. He owned and operated the second steam thresher to be sold in Manitoba which he bought in the fall of 1876. It and the first one sold came up the Red River by barge. When the engine was taken off, the barge tipped and J. J. Cohoe's engine rolled off into the river.

Alex Adams came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in spring, 1874 and homesteaded on NW 7-7-7. He served as councillor of Ward 2 and was on the Ridgewood school board for a number of years where he served as chairman for some time. He was trustee in the first church and school built in 1879.

Dave Ferguson homesteaded NE 24-7-7 in the spring of 1875 after having come to Manitoba in the fall of 1874. He left the settlement in its early years.

Peter McIntyre came to Manitoba in the fall of 1874 and homesteaded on SW $\frac{1}{4}$ 15-7-6 in the spring of 1875. He sold this land in 1900 and moved on to Grandview.

Robert Mathews came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in the spring of 1875 from One-daga, P.O., Brand County, Ontario, and homesteaded on NW 29-7-7. He was elected to the first Ridgewood school board for Ridgewood in 1882.

Andrew Dykes came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in spring 1875 and homesteaded on SE 7-7-7. His first wife was Matilda England and after her death he married Eliza Reiah. He was killed by a runaway team in 1896 and his second wife died in the early 1900's.

Henry West came to Manitoba about 1875 and homesteaded on NE $\frac{1}{4}$ 6-7-7. Three of his young children died as a result of diphtheria.



A few of the first settlers in the Clearsprings district gathered in the early 1920's to honor Willie Stanger (front row, third from left) on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. All of these pioneers came to Clearsprings prior to 1870. They are: from left, seated, Peter Keating, James Steel, Mr. Stanger, and Malcolm McCaskill. Standing are: Mrs. Malcolm McCaskill, Mrs. A. McCaskill, Mrs. John Gorrie and Mrs. Anderson.

—photo courtesy William Laing

W. Borland came to Manitoba and Clearsprings with his father, J. Borland, in 1875 from North Gore, Russel County, Ontario. He married Frances Mathews, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mathews. After her death he married Jennet Bennie (Mrs. H. McQuade). Mr. Borland was the first mail carrier in the district from Ste. Anne to Clearsprings. The first mail was carried in his vest pocket. He died at the age of 84 years in December, 1945.

John Lund came to Manitoba in spring 1874. He came up from North West Angle (Lake of the Woods) to Narrows on Lake Winnipeg and drove through the States with a neighbor and five horses. After some time he took a job as cook for a railroad gang and returned east. He came back to Clearsprings in 1876 and homesteaded on SW 15-7-7 where he had lighter soil and good water. Here he built a log house and worked with his neighbors in cradling wheat, in which he had experience. He helped Robert Mathews to thatch his first house with mud and long thatch grass. He cradled all his grain and cut all his hay with the scythe. After his herd of cattle reached 24, he bought a mower.

Mr. and Mrs. A.K. Baird (Grace Lund, youngest daughter of John), still live on this original homestead. Mrs. John Lund, before her marriage, was the first Canadian woman cheesemaker in Ontario where she ran a cheese

factory for eight years. Their main source of income was always from the cattle and dairy industry. John Lund died at the age of 74 years in 1912. Mrs. Lund died six years later at the age of 80 years.

William Lund came to Manitoba with his father in the fall of 1876. He worked in Prairie Grove for some time. After marrying Elizabeth Bolton, they bought S $\frac{1}{2}$ of N $\frac{1}{2}$ of 16-7-7. On March 4, 1924 a catastrophe struck the Lund home. During the night their home was burned to the ground and Mrs. Wm. Lund and daughter Mary, also a friend who was visiting at the time, were burned to death. Mr. Lund barely escaped with his life. He was severely burned but recovered and lived until 1945.

Harry Lund came to Manitoba with his parents in 1876. He had been severely crippled as a result of polio. He settled on the S.E. 21-7-7 and married Christina Harrison when 43 years old. He is survived by his wife and daughter May (Mrs. A. M. Burns) and son, Bert, living in B.C. His wife, now Mrs. G. Mathews, is still living in Giroux.

John Reiach came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in the spring of 1877, rented the James Steel farm for two years and the Dyke farm for one year. He finally homesteaded on SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 31-6-7. His son George is still in the district and another son James is in Los Angeles, California.

Jack Mathews came to Manitoba and Clearsprings with his father Ned Mathews, from Brandt County, Ont. in 1876 and homesteaded on N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 10-7-7. He married the widow Mrs. Steers who had one daughter Flossie.

He had three of his own children: Adelarde (Mrs. Jim Harrison), Willie and Emma, all born in Clearspring community. After leaving the community he lived in various places and died in Winnipeg.

Ned Mathews came to the district in the early 70's, around 1876. He homesteaded on SW 10-7-7. He came to the district a widower, his wife having died in Winnipeg. He died in 1888 and was survived by three children: Liza (Mrs. H. Atkinson), Jack Mathews and Sarah (Mrs. Sam McQuade).

Between the years 1876 and 78, **George Norris** with children John, Emma, Georgem, Elsie and Freeman came to Clearsprings from Onedaga P.O., Brandt County, Ont.



Wagons have always been popular with youngsters, even in the nineteenth century. This double-decker would be the envy of everyone in the neighborhood nowadays. The boys in the photograph, taken before 1900, are: Hamilton Laing, left, Ossie McFarlane, in the barrel, and Bob Laing, sons of early settlers in the Clearsprings district.

—photo courtesy William Laing

and homesteaded on S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 19-7-7. Charlie Mabel, Rod and Bertha were born here. He died in 1903 while his wife died several years later in Winnipeg.

W. Stanger came to Manitoba in August 1862 and spent seven years working with the Hudson Bay Co. He returned to Ontario and then came back to Manitoba in September of 1878 or 1879. He paid \$1,100 for 160 acres of farm land and \$400 for 95 acres near Glovers. He worked with John Peterson at the H.B.C.

Wm. Mooney came to Clearsprings in the year 1878 and homesteaded on S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 14-7-6. He was joined by his family later. He was elected to the first board of trustees for Clearsprings in 1882 along with John Langill, T. Rankin and Wm. Mooney as sec. treas.

He also served on the Ste. Anne Municipal Council for Ward 2. When Ste. Anne Municipality extended into that area (before James Glover Sr.), Wm. Mooney Jr. farms were situated on the north half of the same section as the original homestead.

James Simpson came to Manitoba and Clearsprings in May, 1879 from Brandt County, Ont. and homesteaded on S.W. 22-7-7 near where the railroad passed through in 1898. Later, Giroux station was to be built on the corner of this land. The station was first called Steinbach. Mr. Simpson came to Manitoba with his wife, daughter Minnie (Mrs. George Norris) and son George. James, May, Evaline and Julia were born in Manitoba. George is still in the district and can remember the train trip to Winnipeg in 1879 which was drawn by the Countess of Dufferin locomotive. They ran over a steer and the engine left the track. The rest of the journey was made with another locomotive and box cars with planks as seats. These were the only two locomotives in all of western Canada at the time. He was on the Ridgewood school board and in 1907 was elected chairman.

Peter Bennie came to Manitoba and Winnipeg in the late 70's. He later moved to Clearsprings where he homesteaded on N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 3-7-7. He was the only stone mason of the district. At his death in 1904 he was survived by his wife, five daughters and three sons.

Malcolm McCaskill homesteaded in the Clearspring district in 1878 on S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1-7-6, paying \$4.50 per acre plus homestead dues. He drove a stage coach on the Dawson road, motive power consisting of a pair of mules.

Alex McCaskill came to Clearsprings in February 1879, bought the John Mack farm for \$2,000. After his death the farm was taken over by his son Kenneth who sold it in 1947 and moved to Winnipeg.

Wm. Bruce, a real Manitoban, was born in St. James. His father was born in Kildonan on his grandfather's farm which is now the Kildonan park. He settled on N $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 28-7-7 in Clearsprings in 1882 and a year later married Fanny Borland, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. Borland. He died in 1943 and his wife died a year later.

Harry Atkinson of Brandt County, Ontario homesteaded in Clearsprings in 1881 on S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 10-7-7. John and Herb were born in Ontario. Charlie, Albert, Bob, Bertha and Mina were born in this district. He was married in the Brandt County to Eliza Mathews, daughter of Ned Mathews.

W. Thompson came to Manitoba in February, 1884. He arrived by train at Niverville. He homesteaded on S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 10-7-6 and in 1900 sold it and moved to Grandview.

Anglo Halstead bought S.E. 18-7-7 in Clearsprings in 1884 and farmed here for a while. Later he worked for the C.N.R. He enlisted in the First World War. His son Tom was killed in active service and Willie died later. Mr. Halstead died in Vancouver in 1949 where he had been living at the time.

Wm. Acres came to Manitoba in 1870 with the Wolsley Expedition. He served with the Winnipeg Police Force for some time and in 1883 married Gaurette Frenton of Winnipeg. In 1884 he took up farming near Steinbach and died at the age of 39. He left his wife and two children, Fred and Charlie. After his death his wife married David Unger and they had three children: Peter, Katie and Annie.

George Burns and his brother William settled in Clearsprings in the early 80's. George brought out his wife and small child and homesteaded the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 19-7-7. This property was sold to J. J. Cohoe and later he bought NE $\frac{1}{4}$ 3-7-7 where he lived until his death.



Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Laing homesteaded a farm near Ste. Anne (the farm now known as the Stanger farm) in 1870. William Laing, a well-known Clearsprings pioneer, said his father didn't like the idea of a two-mile long farm, as was the case with river lots, and moved to a farm in the Clearsprings district in 1872.

—photo courtesy William Laing

He was survived by his wife, seven sons and two daughters.

Wm. Crawford came to Manitoba and Clearsprings from Penitang, Ontario and homesteaded the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 6-7-7 but left a few years later. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Feb. 13, 1949.

Robert Borland came to Manitoba from Russel County, Ont. in 1883 and settled on the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 31-7-7. He was married in Ontario and had four sons and three daughters. Alex lived about one mile east of the original farm until he passed away.

Arthur Harvey came to Clearsprings in 1885 or 1886 and homesteaded on N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 37-6-7, moved to Winnipeg a few years later and when he came back settled on S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 26-7-7.

John Smith came to Clearsprings in 1897 and worked for John Lund for three years. He then bought the W. Crawford farm on S.E.

6-7-7 in the spring of 1887. The next year he married Emma Norris. He was killed by a bull in 1904. He was survived by his widow and a large family.

Archie Wright came to Clearsprings with Bill Acres in 1884. He homesteaded on S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 10-7-6 and in 1900 moved on to Grandview, Man.

E. Duckworth came to Canada in 1890 from his home in England. In April, 1906 he married Edith Bennie and they settled on N $\frac{1}{2}$ of 16-7-7. His son Alex served on the La Broquerie municipal council for 10 years, as well as secretary of the Ekron School District for many years.

James Penwarden came to Manitoba in 1883 and homesteaded NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of 31-6-7. A few years later he moved to Winnipeg.

In the spring of 1875 **Thomas Borland** left North Gore, County of Russel, Ontario and homesteaded in Clearsprings on the S. $\frac{1}{2}$ of 18-7-7. He also owned E $\frac{1}{2}$ of SE 18-7-7. When his wife died he sold this to his son Alex and spent the rest of his life at the old homestead. He died in 1907. His wife died about six years before he died. She was the first midwife in the district, according to birth registrations; there were no hospitals or doctors around at that time. T. Borland was trustee of the pioneer school which was built in 1879 later used as the first church in Clearsprings.

James Alexander Borland, son of T. Borland, came to Manitoba in 1875. In 1883 he married Miss Elizabeth Brayon who was the first teacher of the Clearsprings school. He homesteaded on the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of N $\frac{1}{2}$ of 18-7-7, and in 1912 moved to Winnipeg. He had two sons, Adrien and Ernest. Ernest died in 1939.

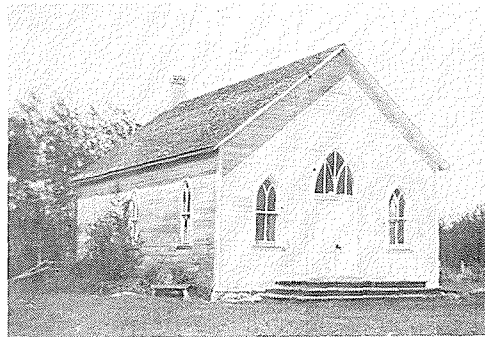
A. J. Cohoe came to the community in the late 70's and homesteaded on S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ 18-7-7, later taken over by Duncan Gilchrist and later by Anglo Hasted.

Duncan Gilchrist came to Clearsprings at the end of the 70's or early 80's. He later moved on to Ile des Chenes where he stayed till his death.

First church and school

1879 was the year when the first log church and school was built at Clearsprings. It was situated on the north side of the coulee from the later church. Trustee was T. Borland; W. Laing was secretary treasurer. In the year 1880 Miss Abigail McKibbin was teacher and the first students were Priscilla Mooney, Martha, Liza, Willie, John and Mary Glover, Emma, George and John Norris, George, Maggie, Francis, Margery and Mary Matthews, Tom, Dave, Mary, Rachel and Jennie Laing, Fannie, Matilda and Lizzie Borland, George, Reach, Melville and Emmie West, John, Dave and Rachel Langill and Jennie and Willie Martin. John Cole taught the next year.

No school was held in 1882 as both the Clearsprings and Ridgewood schools were built that year. From 1880 to 1893 this school was used as a church. A second church was built in 1893 and on July 30, 1893 it was opened by Dr. George Bryce. Rev. James Robertson preached in various homes previous to the building of the first church. The first church service to be held in this district took place at the William Laing, Sr. home in 1877. On August 1, 1943 the Clearsprings



Prior to the construction of this church in the Clearsprings district in 1893, the Clearsprings School had served for over 10 years as both a church and a school. Rev. James Robertson preached in various homes before the first church was built and the first church service to be held in the district took place at the William Laing Sr. home in 1877.

—photo courtesy William Laing

church celebrated its 50th anniversary at which Dr. Riddell officiated.

The Ridgewood school was built during the summer of 1882 on the South East corner of SW 19-7-7. First trustees were James Steel, J. J. Cohoe and Robert Matthews. Mr. Steel was the first chairman while J. J. Cohoe was first secretary-treasurer. The school was built by A. J. Cohoe on a contract price of \$700 which included school desks and other furnishings. School was first opened on June 18, 1887 with Miss Elizabeth Nesbit as teacher.

The Ridgewood school district celebrated its 50th anniversary June 24, 1933.

The Ste. Anne Municipality was organized in 1884, which included at that time the south half of township 6-7, also part of La Broquerie. Township 6-7 was later dropped and the name was changed to La Broquerie. In 1907 it was changed back to Ste. Anne.

The Clearsprings school was also built in the summer of 1882 on the south east corner of the S.W. ¼ of Sec. 23-7-7. Miss Elizabeth Bray, (Mrs. Alex Borland) was the first teacher in that school. The first school board was made up of W. Mooney, Sr., secretary-treasurer; T. Rankin and John Langill.

Rev. Alexander McFarlane was probably one of the best known early pastors of the Clearsprings church. He came here in 1896 and lived in the community with his wife and children till 1904 when his wife died. He died 10 years later and is buried in the Clearsprings cemetery as is his wife. Four daughters, Annie (Mrs. G. Barler), Bill (Mrs. Blan), Ethel and Merle all died in the prime of life. All have been buried near their parents.

Nostalgic reminiscing marks the end of an era

There was an evening of nostalgic reminiscing at Pete's Inn in Steinbach on Friday, Feb. 9, 1968 when trustees of the Clearsprings School District who had at one time or another held office on the school board were honored by the district at an informal dinner.

They were also knowingly marking the end of an era that had lasted for 84 years. With the establishment of the unitary division in Hanover the meeting marked the dissolution of their school district. For the previous two years the school had been closed with pupils being transported to Steinbach schools.

Nineteen former or present trustees and their wives attended the meeting. All members of the school board, either past or present, who were still living, were in attendance.

Old documents and records had been brought along and were scanned and enjoyed after the dinner. A total expenditure of \$449.20 had been entered in one of the books for the erection of a school house in the year 1882 at Clearspring, it was re-

vealed. It was noted that William Mooney, the grandfather of the Mooney's still living in the area, donated the one-acre plot for the school.

Recollections of past school days were brought to mind by Mrs. Ken McCaskill of Winnipeg, one of the former teachers at Clearsprings. Her husband attended as a former trustee. Mrs. McCaskill, listed on old records as Miss M. Chalmers, taught at the Clearsprings School for about two and a half years around 1917-1920. Her account, however, was the product of research into the very early days of the school and contained many humorous and revealing incidents.

Very often, Mrs. McCaskill said, a friendly skunk would find shelter beneath the school



The Clearsprings School had a remarkable enrollment in 1895 considering the fact that school attendance at that time wasn't compulsory and most pupils would stay at home for any little excuse. Pupils in the class of 1895 were: front row left to right, Alice McCaskill, Julia Tomlinson, Austin MacFarlane, Duncan McIntyre, Mac Thompson, Alfred Winfield, and Theodore Winfield. Second row, Cassie Rankin, Sadie Thompson, Beatrice Anderson, Dolly Langill, Jessie Jamieson, Merrill MacFarlane, Flossie Rankin, Matilda Thompson and Bella Keating. Third row, Joe Langill, Archie McIntyre, Hamilton Laing, Melville MacFarlane, John Friesen, John Tomlinson, John Wukert, Kenneth McCaskill, Howard Rankin and Charlie Winfield.

George W. Bartlett, at left, was one of the first teachers at the Clearsprings School which was built in 1882 to replace the original church and school built in 1879. Mr Bartlett is believed to have arrived in the Clearsprings area around 1894 and was the first teacher to teach English in Steinbach, using the cheese factory as a classroom.

—photo courtesy William Laing

house which had no foundation, making its presence very obvious.

School attendance prior to 1912, when attendance was made compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen was rather erratic. Since pupils stayed home for any little excuse, many didn't get beyond the third or fourth grade. It seems that the teacher taught pupils on an individual basis, without any definite program of studies to be completed in any one year. Before 1900, the school at Clearsprings started in April and ended with the Christmas concert.

Slates and slate pencils made a loud scratchy noise and were difficult to erase, except for the fellows who more often than not used their shirt sleeves.

Mrs. McCaskill recalled that in the earlier years, after the children attended school throughout the winter, the first person to get to school would light the fire in the big box stove around which the children would huddle for an hour or more before beginning classes. Later, when a janitor was hired, he was paid a dollar a year for lighting the fire.

Readers for the primary grades, said Mrs. McCaskill, showed the greatest change in educational standards. In years gone by, a child would have to learn to read from dull, uninteresting books with few, if any pictures. It took a child a long time to learn to read the words which were not planned especially for a first grader as they are today. When a child did learn to read a short story, it lacked any expression whatever.

The history of the Clearsprings School goes back to 1869 when three families from southern Ontario homesteaded in the area. Tom Rankin, who homesteaded on the land on which the Manitoba Mennonite Museum is presently located, John Langill, on the present Ben A. Reimer farm, and John Mack, were names recalled to mind by the older trustees in attendance at Friday's meetings.

By 1880 twenty-four families of Irish and Scotch descent and one of Swedish descent, are listed in Harry Turnpenny's account of the history of Clearsprings. This account was not available at the meeting, having been placed in the Public Archives but was remembered by W. Laing.

With a number of growing families in the district, the need was felt for a school and church for their growing families. A temporary building was built near the site of the church which is still known as the old Clearsprings church. This building served as a school during the week and as a Presbyterian place of worship on Sunday.

The district grew very rapidly and by 1882 it was decided to accommodate the two areas of the community by forming the Ridgewood and Clearsprings districts. The school which was built at that time was located a short distance from the present school building. A number of the first teachers at Clearsprings were listed as Miss Bray, Miss Rivers, Miss Mitchell, Miss Chisholm, Miss Bredin, Miss Morden, Mr. McDonald, Mr. Harrington and Mr. Doubleday. Of these Miss Bredin later became principal of the Laura Secord School in Winnipeg and Mr. Doubleday also was later employed by a city school.

A total of 33 Anglo-Saxon names appear on the list of teachers in the years between 1882 and 1925. After 1914 a number of Mennonite-origin names appear on the list. The Mennonite families who moved onto the area in the years after 1874 possibly preferred to educate their children in private schools either in Steinbach or Blumenort where German was the main language of instruction and religion was one of the more important subjects. By 1920 Mennonite names were included in the school register.

In 1919, the second Clearsprings School was built. The previous school building had served the area for 37 years and the new one housed pupils for another 47.

At the time of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the school, a special gathering was held to commemorate the event. At this time A.A. Toews was the teacher at the school. A list of students who had completed their chosen occupation was given. A number of students apparently continued their education elsewhere and some even returned to Clearsprings to teach. Five Keating girls are listed as having chosen teaching as an occupation. Langill, Lund, Mooney, Giesbrecht, Laing, Toews, and Penner are names which reoccur in this list.

21. The Friedensfeld settlers arrived 1891-92

The first group of settlers to take up the rocky land on Township 6-6 south of Steinbach arrived in 1891-92. German Lutherans, most were from the Ukraine and had lived under much the same conditions as the Mennonites who were now their neighbors.

The two groups had others things in common as well, such as language and the capacity for a hard day's work and consequently the Friedensfeld¹ settlers and the Mennonites began an agreeable relationship.

The Friedensfeld pioneers did not arrive in large groups as the Mennonites had 15 years previously and as a result, some of these people worked for the Mennonites in the Steinbach

area before buying farms of their own. By 1901 there were several hundred German Lutherans in the East Reserve. By far the majority of these were in the Friedensfeld area where two churches served the people.

Trade from this settlement has always been with Steinbach and after the new immigrants had settled down, an impressive number went into business for themselves in that community. Their contribution to Steinbach and area has been considerable and the names of a number of businesses are those of Friedensfeld Lutherans.

They have also made tremendous strides in the agricultural field. Coming after the Mennonites as they did, they didn't receive the most productive land and yet their farms rank with the best and their neatly-kept yards and fields match those of their neighbors.

1. Friedensfeld received its name from Martin Barkman, an early Mennonite farmer who moved approximately 1½ miles south of the east end of Steinbach in the 1870's and probably gave the area its name (Friedensfeld means a peaceful place or field) because he was the first person there.



This old photograph shows Mr and Mrs G. E. Kornelsen of Steinbach, centre, with some of the Friedensfeld pioneers at the right hand side. It is not known when this photograph or on what occasion it was taken.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

The oldest pioneer

John Oswald of Friedensfeld, who died at the age of 85 on May 25, 1951, was the last of the early Friedensfeld pioneers. He was born in Warsaw, Poland. His father was a shoemaker which trade Mr Oswald also followed until 1892 when he and Mrs Oswald migrated to Canada.

They spent the first winter in Winnipeg where Mr Oswald worked for the C.P.R. He considered himself fortunate to receive 15 cents per hour. At that time it took about 16 hours of work in order to pay for a bag of flour.

The next year they moved four miles west of Steinbach to Ebenfeld, where they lived for three years. But as every ambitious young man in the early years of the century, Mr Oswald wanted his own farm and consequently homesteaded in the Friedensfeld district. If no land had been cleared, a homestead could be had for \$10.

If life had been hard in Poland, it was twice as hard here. There was very little income and the nearest market was in Winnipeg. Mr Oswald thought nothing of walking to Winnipeg and although roads were poor, he covered the distance in 10 hours.

While Mrs Oswald took care of the little home, Mr Oswald worked in Gretna during the harvesting season. Once when news of a forest fire reached him, he walked all the way home to find the fire a few rods from the buildings.

On this homestead the Oswalds lived and raised a family of 10. They are: Dan, Harry, and Arthur and Mrs Roy Nuerenberg, in the Friedensfeld district; Mrs Lydia Topnik, Hochstadt; John, Swift Current; Pastor Fred Oswald, S. Edmonton; James, Albert and Otto, north of Edmonton.

In 1925 Mr Oswald organized the Oswald S.D. He was a man of exceptional vigor for he himself cut the logs, had the lumber sawed and drew the plan for the school. At the advice of the minister of education, the school was given his name.

Mr and Mrs Oswald spent their declining days at the home of their daughter, Mrs Roy Nuerenberg, still in reach of the clang of the school bell that summoned their grandchildren and great-grandchildren to school.

History of the St. Paul's Lutheran Church by Wm. Mantie

Some of the facts set forth in the ensuing chapters could not be based on authentic information. The original church records dating from 1892 to 1912 were destroyed by fire when the first school house burned.

Our ancestors, parents, grandparents, having heard of this wonderful and glorious country before the end of the nineteenth century, decided to embark on this great adventure of migrating to the New World. As early as 1892 some of the first German Lutheran immigrants, possibly having heard of a little Mennonite settlement called Steinbach south of Winnipeg, ventured in the same direction.

The open land north of Steinbach had already been claimed by the Mennonites as early as 1874 so the farms available at the time were south of Steinbach where heavy bushland with rocks and boulders were in abundance. We can hardly imagine what courage and faith in God such an undertaking required; coming from Russia, Poland, Germany, old and civilized countries to an almost complete wilderness.

Despite the great hardships, the years 1892 to 1903 saw a steady influx of German families. These steadfast ancestors realized from the beginning that the family altar was not nearly sufficient to bolster their faith and they took steps to commune and fellowship together. Naturally, they gathered in houses on Sundays, their ox-teams providing the means of travel. Taking turns at conducting reading services as soon as the number warranted, these families proceeded to erect a house of worship which served a two-fold purpose: week-days as a school-house and on Sundays as a place of worship.

One part of the building was allotted to the teacher as living quarters. The first German teacher engaged was Mr. Greber, who taught the "three R's" and conducted reading services on Sundays. From time to time Pastor Becker from the General Council Synod tended these families with "Word" and sacraments.

After a few years a different teacher was engaged by the name of Ludwig Klebe.

During all these years a steady flow of Lutheran settlers continued. To give courage to those settled earlier, more services were

required by ordained pastors which at that time the General Council Synod was unable to provide.

Accordingly, an appeal was made to President Gehrke of the Ohio Synod who succeeded in acquiring the service of a student of the St. Paul's Lutheran Seminary by the name of Henry Honebein. Intern Honebein was a wise choice by President Gehrke. For three years he tended this field. With horse and buggy he navigated rough roads in his parish from near and far and it was with a great deal of regret that the people of this district had to part with him since he had to resume his studies in the seminary before being ordained into the ministry. In 1953, when Friedensfeld celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, Pastor Honebein was present to preach the anniversary sermon.

The continued growth of the Lutheran population during these years gave the necessary prompting that a church was a necessity in the community. A congregation was organized with four men as church council. They were as follows: Mr Weisner, Mr Schilke, Mr Radtke, and Mr Krentz. In 1902, construction of the St. Paul's Church commenced. Adolf Mueller was head carpenter and Gottlieb Staerk his assistant. All other labour was voluntary. In 1903 the church was completed. It was dedicated the same year.

After the departure of Mr Honebein, the congregation re-engaged Mr Klebe for a number of years. In the meantime, the first public school had also been built, which meant the end of the German classes.

The first teacher, A. P. Salemka of the public school, was fortunately German so after Mr Klebe saw fit to leave, teacher Salemka was prevailed upon to conduct reading services. At the time nobody realized how long this arrangement would work. Teacher Salemka took his duties seriously, studied theology at home and before long was able to offer the congregation full-fledged sermons.

This arrangement appeared to be ideal since the congregation received practically the same service as from an ordained minister for the mere sum of \$300 per year. The financial circumstances did not permit a full-time pastor. In 1926 there appeared to be some dis-sension on this matter. The result was that about 20 families organized a new congregation

under the name of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church. However, St. Paul's congregation survived the loss and continued to operate under the original system. Twice a year, ministers from Winnipeg looked after the needs of the congregation in respect to confirmation and celebration of Holy Communion.

Special mention should be made of President L.F. Tank who succeeded President Gehrke in office. He ministered frequently to the congregation in its infancy enduring primitive means of travel. He was followed in later years by Rev. Paul Kohlmeier, Pastor Arnsdorf and Pastor Schmok, the last pastor under the original arrangement.

In 1931, Mr Salemka, tired of the teaching profession, turned his attention to the ministry, was ordained and accepted a call to the Biggar parish in Saskatchewan. From this time on, Friedensfeld had its first permanent pastor in the person of Rev. G. Weiss. His stay of five years, when the depression was at its height, saw the alteration of the church with the church bell installed.

During Pastor Weiss' stay a number of Lutheran families from St. Paul's congregation migrated to Brokenhead, Manitoba and Pastor Weiss made it his duty to organize them into a congregation. This congregation is still in existence with a confirmed membership of about eighty.

As a gifted musician and music teacher, Pastor Weiss gave unstintingly of his time in teaching music and singing to the young people of the congregation, and today, almost a quarter of a century later, there are still many of his former pupils who must pay tribute to him even though he has passed on.

In 1936 Pastor Weiss accepted a call to Burstall, Saskatchewan. The vacancy created was filled by Pastor Hintz. During his stay the congregation grew extensively. He worked hard and church attendance was excellent as a result, even during the winters.

In 1941 Pastor Hintz accepted a call to the United States leaving the congregation without a minister. Pastor Heidman accepted a call in December of the same year. During his stay, a new parsonage was built for this family whose members adapted themselves so readily to this country parish.

In 1947 Pastor Heidman accepted a position in an invalid home in the United States.

Pastor George Schwindt accepted a call in October of the same year. During his stay some remarkable changes took place: electricity was distributed to the countryside and post war prosperity brought many changes. Retired farmers could even afford the conveniences of living in town.

The influx of retired Lutherans to Steinbach was largely responsible for the founding of the St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Steinbach.

Pastor Schwindt, after a stay of almost 10 years, found the ministering of the two congregations too rigorous and accepted a call to Waldersee, Man. His departure marked the end of the pastor living in the country parsonage. The acute shortage of pastors, more conveniences in town for the pastor, the general trend of establishing the churches in town were all influential in slowly eliminating the country churches.

August 1, 1957, Pastor Hulsemann accepted a call to the Steinbach-Friedensfeld parish and a parsonage was built in Steinbach to

accommodate the pastor and family. This marked the end of an era of over 55 years during which pastors and their families lived in the country.

In Pastor Hulsemann the Lutheran congregations now had a strong leader whose driving ambition came to be the amalgamation of the three Lutheran churches: the St. Paul's Lutheran Church and the St. John's Lutheran Church at Friedensfeld and the St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Steinbach.

Working tirelessly at this goal, he achieved it, with the help of other church members and leaders, on Oct. 31, 1965 when members of all three congregations joined hands in fellowship.

Eight visiting Lutheran pastors and lay members of the congregations addressed the large congregation at the historic occasion. Performing a brief ceremony of merger was Pastor W. T. Weind, chairman of the Manitoba Lutheran Conference.



A photo taken following the final service at St. Paul's Lutheran church in Friedensfeld on Pentecost Monday, May 30, 1966. The group was merged the following Sunday with the Steinbach church. In this photograph many of the people are from Steinbach who came to join their friends in the farewell service.

—Carillon News photo

The next spring, on June 5, 1966, the new \$132,000 St. Paul's Lutheran Church opposite the corner of Henry Street and Kroeker Avenue was opened. For the members of the three congregations who put their resources together to build the beautiful building, it was a great

milestone. But the man who was largely responsible for the merger, moved on shortly after this. Pastor Hulsemann served the congregation until Jan., 1970 when he went to Tisdale, Sask. and was replaced by Pastor W. Gartke of Eaton, Sask.



Grunthal, looking southwest, in 1967.

—Carillon News photo

22. Grunthal was first settled in 1876

Built on the ancient ridge road which was once a beach or sand bar in the ancient Lake Agassiz, the village of Grunthal was settled in 1876 by Bergthal Mennonites.

It was probably one of the more attractive settlements in the Reserve and received its name from the prominent rise in the otherwise flat and bush-covered land at the west end of the village.

Grunthal was originally called Gruenthal, which translated means green valley but over the years the mispronunciation of the German name led to the dropping of the "e" and the lovely "Gruenthal" became the Anglicized but guttural "Grunthal."

Some of the first settlers to this community came over from Russia with the first 1874 immigration but remained in Ontario for the winter to earn money to buy supplies. In so doing, these settlers avoided a winter of severe hardship and near-starvation which had to be endured by the founders of neighboring villages such as Kleefeld and Steinbach.

After spending the winter in Ontario with Mennonites of other denominations, some of the first settlers to found Grunthal moved on into Manitoba, first travelling by rail and boat to Duluth, then switching again to rail to Fargo - Moorehead where steamers were boarded on the Red River and the immigrants carried to the already well established landing place near Niverville.

These settlers did not go directly to Grunthal but first settled at Gnadenfeld, about two miles northwest of Grunthal. Why some settlers then moved on to found Grunthal isn't known for certain but Mennonite villages were springing up all over the Reserve at this time and it is probable that more room and a good location on The Ridge Road were the main reasons.

Though the group of settlers from Gnadenfeld probably made up the largest number of

families to found Grunthal, there were others as well, notably from Friedrichstal (north of the present village) and from small temporary settlements east and south of Grunthal which later completely disappeared.

Some of the names of families that settled here in 1876 are: Johann Klassen, Peter Sawatzky, Jacob Hiebert, Klaas Peters and two brothers, Abraham and Johann Kauenhowen.

While Johann Kauenhowen moved to the West Reserve, Abraham remained and in 1876 or 1877 built a Mennonite house-barn on his farm at the west end of what is now Grunthal's Main Street. This farm was later purchased by Diedrich J. Rempel and he lived there until around 1960. The house is still a landmark in the community.

The Gruenthal of 1876 was not founded in the same location as the Grunthal of today. The farm village was laid out on Section 22, Township 5, just at the west border of the present village.

As elsewhere the first years were very difficult in this Mennonite community and the settlers no doubt complained that they had more than their fair share of stones and marginal land. But while this was certainly the case, they also had their share of stalwart and colorful pioneers and the names of three continually crop up in any research into the community's early history.

The most colorful by far was "Dr." Johann D. Peters. He moved to Grunthal from the Rosengard settlement in 1877 and his home, later the Jacob Woelke farm, was a familiar one to people from as far as 80 miles around. His feats became folklore and there is no doubt that his amazing abilities and almost wizard-like skill greatly helped put Grunthal on the map in the first 25 years of settlement. (See story of Mr Peters in another chapter dealing with hospitals and medical services).

Aside from his work as farmer and chiropractor, Mr. Peters also started the community's first store. This was the only store in the village and area until 1892 when the two best known Grunthal business pioneers, Johan Braun and John F. Krahn, bought the store and also started several other business ventures.

Not as much is known of Mr Krahn as Mr Braun but records indicate that he may have been the first bee-keeper in the East Reserve, having had four bee colonies in 1893. Two of his nephews, John Krahn and Abe Krahn, later became well-known carpenters in the community.

J. F. Braun and J. Krahn —two early businessmen

Johan F. Braun, an outstanding figure in the community and Reserve, was born in Russia in 1857 and came to Canada at the age of 19, settling at Gnadenfeld, near Grunthal. He was married to Helen Abrams in 1880 and farmed until 1890 when poor health forced him to seek a different livelihood.

In company with his father and two brothers he purchased a Massey binder in the late 1870's and by persuading two or three neighboring farmers to buy implements from the Massey company, was made an agent or salesman.

In 1892 Mr Braun moved to the village of Grunthal and together with his brother-in-law, the above-mentioned John F. Krahn, built a



The Grunthal Milling Company's flour mill, built in 1911.

—photo courtesy Otto Hamm



Johan Braun and Mrs. Braun of Grunthal. Mr. Braun was reeve of the RM of Hanover for seven years, being first elected in 1904. Well known and respected, Mr. Braun was also one of Grunthal's foremost pioneer businessmen.

—photo courtesy Otto Hamm

new store and took over from Mr Peters who then concentrated primarily on his practice.

After 1876, the Reserve as a whole was over the worst pioneering difficulties (there had been no time to seed a crop in 1874 and there was a crop failure in 1875) and the fortunes of the enterprising firm of Braun and Krahn as it came to be known, grew rapidly.

Though dates are not certain, the two businessmen also built a saw mill and grist mill powered by a steam engine around 1892. They took over the McCormick machine agency in 1894 and with increasing sales of such items as the Emerson Gang plows and the Fish-Chatham wagons and sleighs, established the village as one of the three main trade centres in the Reserve.

The coming of the Ukrainian settlers to the Sarto area east of Grunthal in 1900 had a favorable impact on the community of Grunthal throughout its history. The Ukrainians came to Grunthal for trade and gave the village a very definite economic lift.

Interestingly, the impact of this new trade wasn't quite what it could have been. Braun

and Krahn sold their store to a Mr Feinsilber at this time so they could concentrate on their many other business ventures. Mr Feinsilber however, was only the first in a series of Jewish storekeepers who didn't really do very well in the community.

Mr Feinsilber sold out to Louis Schatsky in 1903 and around Christmas the next year the building burned to the ground. Mr Schatsky rebuilt it and had another small fire the next summer before the store had even been completely restocked. Probably disillusioned, he sold out to two St. Pierre merchants who kept the store for less than half a year before reselling. A series of Jewish merchants ran the store in the following years and the ill-fated business burned to the ground a second time, in 1907, when it was struck by lightning.

Though the store was rebuilt in 1908, it never realized its full potential for two main reasons, the one being that a whole new business community was being developed on a street east of the old village and the other, that a group of residents and businessmen formed the Grunthal Milling Company and built a large competitive store in 1911.

The Grunthal Milling Company deserves special mention. Members were Peter Krahn, Abram Krahn, Johann Krahn, Wilhelm Krahn, Jakob Pries, Peter Funk, Jakob Funk, Johan Braun, Jakob Dueck, Adolph Mueller and Jacob Toews and their main objective was to build an all-important mill for making flour.

The gasoline-powered mill and a large store were built in 1911. It was a big venture. The 50-barrel mill was kept busy and Bruno Hamm, a German-Mennonite, was one of the first millers.

Growth of the community in the new location continued until the next major milestone in Grunthal's history in 1916 when, through a repeal of clause 285 of the Public Schools Act of 1890, English was made the sole language of instruction in the province and all children between the ages of seven and 14 were compelled to attend public schools unless private education was provided for them in a manner acceptable to the school authorities.

In 1918 all Mennonite schools were declared inadequate and to the Mennonites, who placed the education of their children as all-important,

this came as nothing short of a catastrophe. (See chapter on the school problem).

After some attempts to by-pass this new law, some of the Mennonites began looking for a new country in 1920. Delegates were sent to Paraguay and when these returned, bubbling with enthusiasm, the move began.

Many (the exact number is not known) left Grunthal for South America in the following years including the colorful Dr. Peters who left Canada in January, 1927 and died in December of the same year.

Despite the loss of many of its residents the population was not depleted for long. Around the same time of the exodus to Paraguay, some 8,000 Mennonite refugees began arriving in Manitoba and so, in a comparatively short period of time, a large part of the population of Grunthal and the entire East Reserve was changed.

Who were the newly arrived Mennonites? Basically, they were like those who had settled and pioneered the Reserve in the 1870's in that they were also Mennonites with the same traditions. But there were also many differences. The first groups to leave Russia in the 1870's were far more conservative than those that stayed and emigrated in the 1920's. The **Russlaender**, or Russian Mennonites as they were known, who came in the 1920's were as a whole better educated and enterprising; they had prospered in Russia while the 1874 immigrants pioneered a difficult new country.

Assimilation was achieved without great difficulties however and the community gained an economic impetus from this influx that carried it successfully through the difficult Depression years and towards continued growth in the 1940's, '50's, '60's and '70's.

Industry and economic development

Grunthal did not have the large trading area and the comparatively superior farm land of Steinbach nor the railway connection that boosted Niverville. But its location in the southern part of the Reserve allowed the community to build up a trading area which was encouraged through good services.

Fortunately for the community, one of these early services was a cheese factory. Probably

first built around 1892 by a Mr Frechette of St. Pierre, it was bought out by the firm of Braun and Krahn within a few years and rebuilt.

The history of the cheese factory from here on is difficult to trace. Apparently the factory was sold to the same Mr Feinsilber who briefly owned the former Braun and Krahn store around 1901. The date of the sale is not known but it appears the factory closed not too many years after this and the farmers either took their milk to the cheese factory at Hochstadt or made butter.

Then came the 1920's and a new era of prosperity. Farmers started shipping their milk and cream to Winnipeg via Carey and the CPR and in 1927 the Winnipeg City Dairy established a milk station at Grunthal.

The old three-storey Grunthal Milling Co. building was purchased, partially torn down and converted into a cheese factory. Butter was made and a contract with the farmers was made to ship milk for cheese.

Abe Driedger, well known local businessman was the first Mennonite butter maker and lived upstairs in the factory. In 1939 an addition was added to the building. People's Co-op bought the factory in 1947 and this company tore down the wooden structure and built a modern brick building.

The dairy industry was the key to economic development in the community. It fostered new businesses such as a transfer, bakery, stores and later garages.

In 1957 Modern Dairies purchased the factory from Kraft Foods and renamed it Medo-Land Dairies Ltd. They installed a huge new milk evaporating and powder plant. It began operation on April 14, 1958 and was the first powder plant in Western Canada. (See "The Grunthal Factories" in chapter on Agriculture).

Increased livestock also resulted in a demand for more specialized feed. For some time one of the more prosperous farmers in the Grunthal area, Diedrich Heese, provided this service with a portable machine but then, in 1935, Julius Klassen left his farm to start the Grunthal Feed Service with a three horsepower motor and a farm crusher.

The going was very difficult for awhile but business picked up and the next addition was

a buckwheat grist mill which Mr Klassen purchased for \$30 from a Tolstoi man.

The mill was an old fashioned one that had two large stones for grinding the buckwheat. It had been handmade by a Ukrainian pioneer but it made good grits.

Ten years later, when hydro came to Grunthal, the mill was switched over to electricity. The business grew steadily.

Deserving special mention in the growth of the community and area are the blacksmiths. The first man to pound an anvil was Wilhelm Friesen who had his shop right in the community. The date he started blacksmithing is uncertain but it is known that he moved elsewhere in 1892.

The next blacksmith was Jacob Wiens who stayed on the job until 1901. After that there wasn't anyone to take up the trade for many years until the late Peter P. Friesen started up (see "Peter P. Friesen - doctor, blacksmith and farmer" in the chapter: "The Story of Medical Care and Bethesda Hospital") and became equally proficient at repairing broken wagons and setting bones.

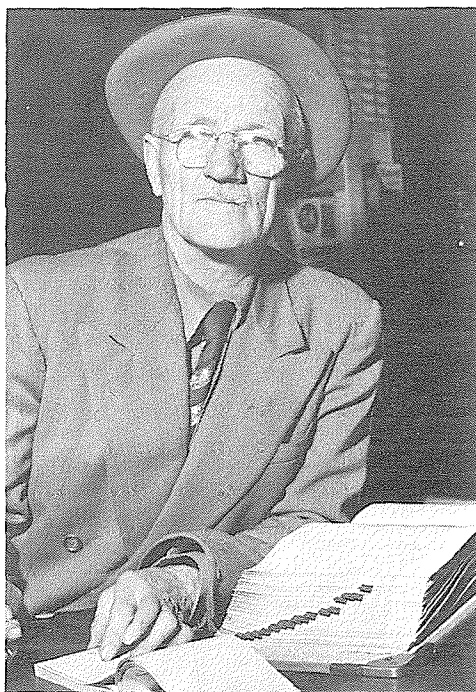
Mr Friesen served farmers in a large surrounding area right up until 1957 but two other men, David F. Toews and Gerhard Pries had started up as well very many years before Mr Friesen retired in Grunthal. Mr Pries only stayed a short while and this left Mr Toews who became the best known of all the Grunthal blacksmiths, carrying on nearly to the present.

Hard - working and well appreciated, Mr Toews helped many a farmer through the Depression years when everyone was poor and worn-out machinery kept returning to his shop.

Guenther's store had start in '32

Most of the businesses that presently line the community's long Main Street had their beginning during the Depression, or just after. Most notable, in this respect, is the Red and White Store, begun in 1932 by Grunthal's oldest pioneer businessman, Frank Guenther.

He started in a small way. After having been manager of the Grunthal Co-op for a number of years, he was able to purchase a family car. He sold this for \$400 and these were his assets for starting in business himself.



Frank Guenther, once manager of the Grunthal Co-op Store, started his own store in 1932. His was the first business on today's Main Street. The Red and White store he founded is today the largest in the community.

—Carillon News photo

Mr Guenther purchased \$400 worth of merchandise and Steinbach lumber dealer M.M. Penner was sufficiently impressed with his zeal to let him have all the material for a modest building on credit.

The carpenters were hired on the basis that they could take their earnings in groceries and merchandise in small quantities after the store was open for business.

On June 1, 1932 Guenther's doors opened. His faith in the community was justified. In one year he paid off his building debts and his carpenters.

This store was at first located on the north side of Main Street. It was the first business located on what is today the main street of the village. The other stores were on the gravelly ridge to the west. The cheese factory, the Co-op and Gersteins store were located north of the present main street.

In 1941 Mr Guenther moved his store across to the south side of the street. In 1946 he added

another 40 feet of frontage. Further additions followed and the store rapidly became the largest in the community, drawing trade from a large surrounding area.

Though there were several other business pioneers that had their start in these years, the most notable, probably, were D.F.Hiebert, Ted Chornoboy and John D. Warkentin.



David F. Toews, blacksmith in Grunthal for 35 years. He closed shop in 1968.

—Carillon News photo

D. F. Hiebert

Mr Hiebert's business career began in the spring of 1938 when he moved into a restaurant he had purchased for \$500.

With \$3.50 cash and a crippled arm and leg, lesser men would have despaired but Mr. Hiebert, together with his wife, adjusted. The success of the business did wonders for Mr Hiebert's outlook on life. The Hiebert's soon had a line of groceries instead of the restaurant and Mrs Hiebert discovered she had a flair for yard goods and these were added to the merchandise.

In 1952 Mr Hiebert bought out the defunct

Brookside egg grading station and after a few years this accounted for half of their volume of business. In recent years Mr Hiebert and his sons have begun a cinder block manufacturing business.

Ted Chornoboy

Mr Chornoboy started in business in 1937, when he purchased the transfer from A.J. Unger. Although this line of business was familiar to his family (his father ran the Sarto Transfer for many years) he decided it wasn't for him and in 1941 sold the trucks and went into the implement business.

Mr Chornoboy devoted considerable time to public service. He served two terms as reeve of the RM of Hanover and is a past president of the chamber of commerce.

John D. Warkentin

Another man who started business in the late 1930's was John D. Warkentin. Like Frank Guenther, he received his early business training as manager of the co-op store and with savings of \$300, built the Grunthal Motors garage in 1937.

It was only a small shop but welding and repair work put him on his feet. In 1939 he took on the Allis Chalmers agency and began selling machinery.

Selling was tough in those days and in most deals, horses had to be taken in trade. Sometimes Mr. Warkentin had as many as 12. After the war he began subdealing Meteor and Mercury cars. In later years he sold the business and eventually, around 1968, after a few other owners it was closed for good.

By June, 1936 Grunthal had four stores, two blacksmith shops, a shoe repair shop, a creamery and a transfer but the population did not go much over 150 until after 1945 because this was not a rich farm area and there were also smaller centres such as Barkfield and Klee-feld that carried on a bit of trade.

And after World War Two there was something else that affected Grunthal's growth - Steinbach. The advent of better roads and the greater service facilities in Steinbach took away much of the Ukrainian trade that had been

coming in from the Sarto area east of Grunthal. With the improved PTH 12 running just two miles past Sarto, this highway acted like a main artery, drawing away trade from Grunthal.

The milk powder plant helped offset this trade loss, however and the many farmers who brought their milk into town left goodly portions of their milk cheques there as well.

Banking facilities were non-existent in Grunthal up until recently and many businesses used the bank at St. Pierre. Efforts to establish banking service in the community began April 29, 1942 when the Grunthal Credit Union was founded in Henry W. Funk's wood working shop.

The first 15 members were J.J. Gerbrandt, J.J. Neufeld, C. Voth, Co-op Store, John S. Dyck, G.P. Falk, Jac. B. Krahn, A.G. Buhler, P.D. Sawatsky, P.H. Janzen, A.F. Krahn, W.P. Froese, J.K. Spenst, J.A. Janz, Geo. Falk. These men all opened up accounts of 50 or 75 cents.

The different locations of the credit union were in this order: Marten Funk's house, Co-op store, Martens Store, Grunthal Transfer Office with P.J. Unrau as manager and present location on Main Street.

The first Credit Union building was purchased and moved to its location on Main St. in 1958. In 1970 a modern new structure was built, half of which is being rented as post office.

The first board of directors was made up of P.H. Janzen, J.A. Janz, J.J. Hiebert, John F. Krahn, J.A. Martens, G.D. Falk, P.C. Falk, P. D. Sawatsky, J.J. Gerbrandt, and J.B. Krahn, all charter members. The assets at the end of



A "Saengerfest" (song-fest) of General Conference Mennonite churches was held at Grunthal in the late 1940's at a site approximately one-eighth of a mile east of the east end Grunthal.

—photo courtesy Art Guenther



Milk production and processing has been Grunthal's main industry for decades. The cheese factory and later the milk powder plant helped make the community the dairy capital of southeastern Manitoba.

—Carillon News photo

the first year totalled \$8.50. In 1947 assets were \$3,000, in 1957 - \$14,000 and in 1966 - \$380,000.

The late 1940's and 1950's and 60's brought other encouraging developments. Streets sprang up on both sides of Main Street and new bungalows indicated prosperity.

New public buildings also made their appearance. An auditorium was built in 1956 and an old folks home in 1960.

4-H clubs thrived and the chamber of commerce agitated continuously for improvements such as hydro, (it came in 1947), a PFRA dam (this was turned down) and better roads (PR 205 was paved in 1969).

The chamber also contributed greatly to the sports program in more recent years by building an arena and an exceptionally fine sports park south of town complete with tennis court and swimming pool.

First church built in 1886

As in all the Mennonite settlements, the matter of establishing a church for worship was of primary importance. Funds did not allow for the building of a place of worship immediately and so homes were used until the Chortitzer congregation built their

church in 1886 at the present location at the west end of town.

Rev. Gerhard Wiebe was the first minister. Many others followed and the church was greatly changed and remodelled over the years.

The second church in the community was founded by the Mennonites who arrived in 1923 - 28. They formed the Elim Gemeinde (congregation) on Feb. 23, 1927. For awhile they held services in the school house but then the National Trust Co., which owned many of the farms the immigrants had settled on (the Trust Co. had purchased them from the Mennonites that left for South America) offered an old vacated house at Schoensee to this congregation and it was dragged to Grunthal with horses and repaired. It became too small a few years later and in 1949 a new one was built nearby. This new church was destroyed by fire in Feb., 1961 and a larger one was built the same summer.

Construction of the third church in the community was begun in late 1964. The E.M.B. congregation, led by Rev. Wm. J. Peters, had held services at a church at Barkfield for the previous nine years and the growth of the congregation had resulted in the need for a new building.

The fourth church was built in Grunthal in 1970 by the Bergthaler congregation which previously worshipped at Spencer, south of Grunthal.

Education was meagre at first

According to Grunthal historian Peter A. Braun, presently of Mt. Lehman, B.C., the children in the community were given some school instruction in their homes in the early years following settlement. Then, in 1894 the first school was built with the first teacher being a farmer, Jacob P. Wiebe.

School was held five months a year, from Nov. 1 to April 1. Boys attended from ages 6 - 14, girls from 6 - 12. Classes were held three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. School began at 8:45 with a short hymn, followed by the Lord's Prayer recited in unison, then another hymn. Morning classes ended at 11:45 with the same procedure except for a different prayer. The morning consisted mostly of writing and spelling, while in the afternoon there was instruction in arithmetic. Great emphasis was put on neat handwriting and a good knowledge of religion.

The students' books consisted of the **Fiebel**, (German language book), Catechism and the New Testament. No history or geography and very little grammar or English was studied.

The second school was built in 1898 and education continued in Grunthal, much as in the other Mennonite settlements, with an em-

phasis on religion and the German language.

Then came World War One and the government, which had been worried for some time about the poor standards of education in the Mennonite communities, enforced a law making English language instruction compulsory.

In the ensuing controversy, many residents in Grunthal as well as other villages decided this infringement on their rights (See chapter on the Trek to Paraguay) was unacceptable and moved to Paraguay.

The former store owned by the Grunthal Milling Co. became the first government school. This building burned on Jan. 20, 1936 and was replaced the same year by a two-room school on Main Street.

Increased enrollment rapidly filled this and another one-room school had to be built in 1939.

A high school was built in the winter of 1949-50. Grade 11 instruction began in 1950 and grade 12 in 1954.

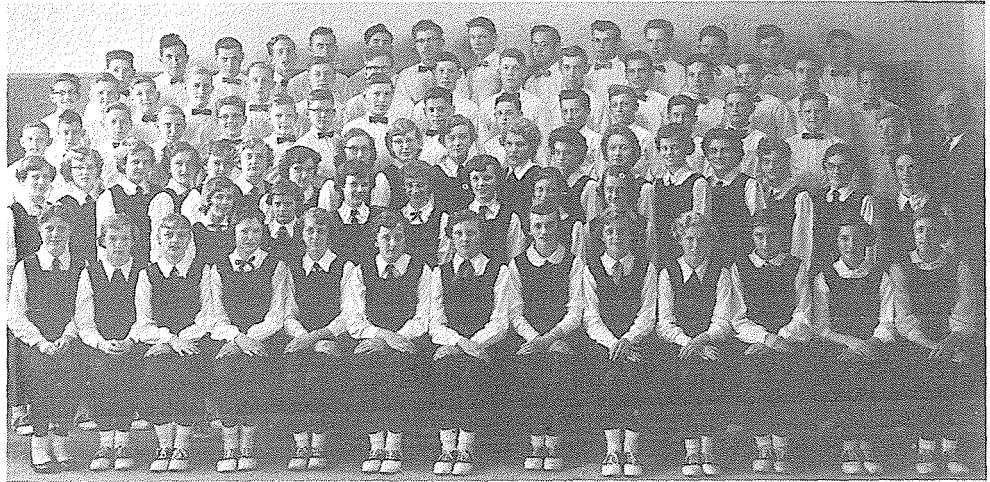
A \$160,000 collegiate was built in 1961.

The standard of education in Grunthal schools has been comparatively high in the last three decades as the community has been able to attract good teachers. Making an outstanding contribution to the community was long-time principal in the 1950's, C.G. Unruh. Not only did Mr Unruh demand high standards in education but he formed school choirs and a string orchestra and gave the school and



This picture was taken around 1932 in front of the old school that burned in 1936. David Heidebrecht, left rear background, was the teacher and some of the students have been identified as Margaret Peters, John Rempel, Jessie Peters, Barbara Enns, Henry Unger, Abe Janz, Art Guenther, Elsie Krahn and Walter Braun.

—photo courtesy Art Guenther



Grunthal junior and senior high school students, March, 1957. Principal, at right, is C. G. Unruh.

—Carillon News photo

community an identity and pride it had not had before.

Sports is special in Grunthal

In Grunthal sports is more than recreation; you can see that by the records. The local fellows have been drubbing teams from the city and far larger communities for as long as the oldtimers can remember.

Particularly colorful is the community's hockey history, the early part of which was closely connected with the Guenther family.

Long before the first hydro reached Grunthal, Frank Guenther's private light plant was supplying light to the rink on hockey nights. This enthusiasm was reflected in his sons who played both hockey and baseball.

The Guenther family was also blessed with a set of triplets, George, Isaac and John, who at one time formed a forward hockey line for Grunthal. They displayed what many people thought was a remarkable show of mental telepathy in their passing but Mr Guenther stated this was only due to a lot of practice.

George passed away in his teens, breaking up Canada's only triplet forward line.

For most of the community's history, the skating rink was situated just north off Main

Street, across the road from the cheese factory (later milk powder plant).

The deep drilled well at the factory provided water for making ice and as soon as the cold weather allowed, volunteers would work throughout the night flattening out the snow with shovels and pouring water.

One or two small shacks, usually old granaries, were used for both dressing rooms and spectators and during a big game these would often be badly jammed. A small stove, often an improvised oil drum with a pipe up through the roof would be glowing red and belching flames out the chimney. Persons standing near the stove would be scorched while those seven feet away might be stamping on frozen feet.

Not infrequently the sparks and flames would ignite the dry shingles on the roof and one or two men would go up and shovel snow on the burning area.

A large, 10 or 12-foot wall surrounded the rink to provide a wind-break and keep out non-paying spectators. Boys would frequently watch the games from nearby oak trees or scale the wall. If a player broke a stick and heaved it over the wall there would always be a mad scramble as three or four boys would try and get it first.

Public support was tremendous. Everyone attended. Opposing teams would sometimes arrive in enclosed trucks - men, women and



Grunthal has always been known for its strong hockey teams and this is where the boys first learned the game. This photo was taken in the early 1930's. Not all the players can be identified but the fellow at right centre is believed to be Abe Friesen who is presently a professor of German in New Brunswick. This ice rink was probably built by one of the managers of the city dairy north of the factory beside the old elementary school. The second ice-rink location was beside Guenther's Store when the store stood where Steve Block's Garage now stands, and the third, behind the present Guenther store. The fourth rink location was on the present high school grounds, west of the present arena and the fifth location was opposite Medo-Land where the water was available from across the street from the plant. The present arena is on the sixth location.

children and players would be treated to lunch after the games. Terrific rivalry was often evident, especially in games against Steinbach.

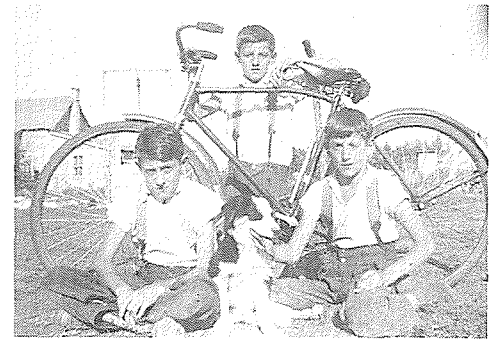
The Grunthal Red Wings played in various leagues over the years but probably the highlight in local hockey history came in February, 1951 when the Red Wings, top team in the Carillon Hockey League, entered the Manitoba Junior B playdowns.

Registered players for the Junior B series were Eddie Guenther, John Wiens, Johnny Wiens, George Loewen, Abe Klassen, Peter and Ernie Janzen, David Epp, Peter Driedger, Leonard Steingart, Yves Turenne, H. Hebert and E. Bellerieve.

With the coming of the enclosed rinks in the 1950's, hockey suffered a bit in the community because existing facilities were inadequate and league games usually had to be played in St. Pierre. But with Grunthal getting its own arena in 1969, the game picked up support and the Red Wings won the Hanover Tache Hockey League championship in 1970 and '71.

Baseball also gained impetus in more recent years with the excellent facilities at the

centennial park south of town. Begun in 1961 by a few enterprising members of the village sports association and chamber of commerce—notably the late Peter Braun—it grew into a huge sprawling complex of ball diamonds, swimming pool, archery range and picnic facilities.



Southeastern Manitoba's first triplets—George, Isaac and John Guenther—were born Nov. 22, 1926, the sons of Mr and Mrs Frank Guenther, Grunthal. When they grew up they became well known to hockey fans as they played in one forward line. In 1943 George was stricken with rheumatic fever and died shortly after his 17th birthday.

—photo courtesy Art Guenther



This photo was taken in 1907 at Schoensee a few miles north of Grunthal on the occasion of Martin F. Broesky's wedding. The people here are from the Schoensee and Burwalde districts. Many of these moved to Paraguay in 1926 and 1927. Third row, left to right: Peter V. Froese, Jacob W. Thiessen, Peter P. Friesen, Peter Pries, Mr. Pries' son, Johann Peters, Jacob Klassen, Abram Froese (in background), Jacob Toews, Jacob Dueck and Abram Klassen. Middle row: Cornelius Dyck, Jacob N. Wiebe, Jacob W. Froese, Abram F. Broesky, Aeltester Johann Dyck. Front row: Jacob Giesbrecht, Diedrich Dueck (auctioneer), Ben Wiebe, A. W. Dueck, George Giesbrecht, Johan F. Broesky and Frank Giesbrecht.

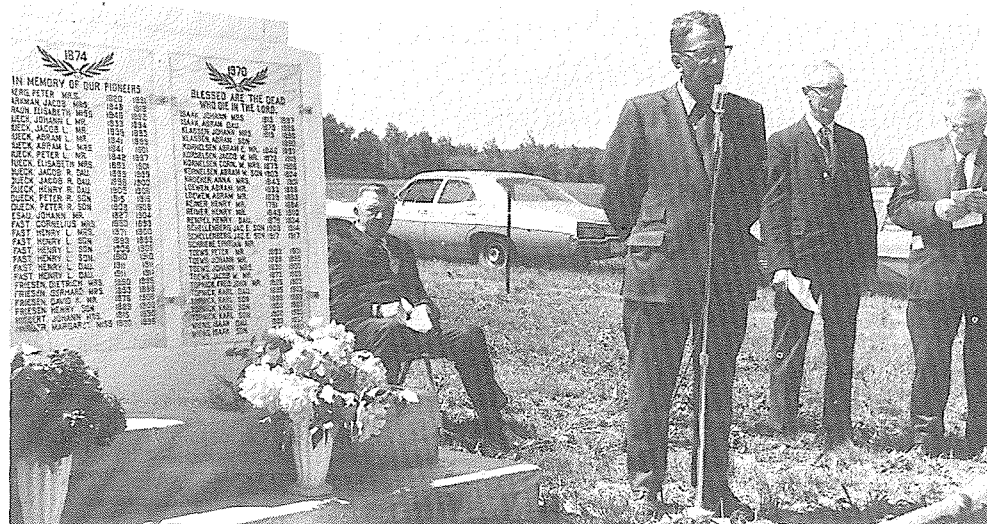
—photo courtesy Mrs. Agatha P. Friesen

23. Kleefeld, the first Mennonite village

The settlers who built the first Mennonite village in the Canadian West at Gruenfeld, just about where the village of Kleefeld now stands, arrived from their long trip from Russia in Winnipeg on July 31, 1874. They had come up the Red River on the old Hudson Bay Co. steamer, "International" and after purchasing supplies in Winnipeg where they were greeted with raised eyebrows, they returned back upstream on the same boat to the point, near Niverville, where the Rat River empties into the Red.

Here, four large immigrant sheds had been built by J. Y. Shantz, an Ontario Mennonite appointed by the federal government to assist with the settling of the Russian immigrants. While women and children settled down in the huts, the men went out to seek and then

painstakingly measure out the villages. Twenty-one villages were founded in that fall of 1874 and the first to be built was Gruenfeld. Original settlers of this historic community, given in order of their homes from the south-east end of the village were: Abraham Loewen Jr., Mrs. Cornelius Penner, Johan Isaac, Johan Esau, Cornelius Loewen, Abraham Schellenberg, Johan Toews Jr., Johan Hiebert, Abraham Dueck, Peter Dueck (teacher), Johann Dueck Jr., John Dueck Sr., Jacob Dueck, Johann Toews Sr., Peter Toews, Cornelius Toews (one of the original delegates from Russia who came to Canada prior to the mass immigration to survey the country and grandfather of C.F. Toews, later founder of Steinbach Bakery), Abraham Loewen Sr. and Peter Berg.



Leonard Barkman, M.L.A. for La Verendrye constituency, addressed an audience of about 75 who attended ceremonies June 20, 1971 marking the restoration of an old pioneer cemetery near Kleefeld. A committee of four Kleefeld residents compiled a list of 56 names of persons believed buried near the site. At Mr. Barkman's right are George Fast and Rev. John R. Friesen, both members of the restoration committee.

—Carillon News photo

Gruenfeld was located in approximately the same location as present-day Kleefeld — on section 32, township 6, range 5. East. Gruenfeld became Kleefeld at the time that post offices began to open up throughout the province. It was discovered that a post office by the name of Gruenfeld already existed on the West Reserve, so a new name had to be found.

Gruenfeld village dissolved its composite original form in 1905 when most of the homesteaders moved out to their farms. By this time they had overcome the tendency, developed in Russia, to build close together for mutual protection against night marauders. (It was this same danger of attack by less than honest and not very gentle natives in Russia which provided the original motive for building the house under the same roof as the barn.)

Though the early history of this and the other settlements is already documented in other chapters, it is historically noteworthy that the homes or shelters of the Gruenfeld village were opened in the months just after settlement to 18 other Mennonite immigrant families. These families soon set out in the oxcarts loaned them by Gruenfelders to find a village site of their own. They did so and called the village Steinbach.

Not blessed with particularly good land, the Kleine Gemeinde group of Mennonites (later also the Holdemann group) at Gruenfeld lived in a closely-knit, progressive community which spread south along the road to Grunthal.

Kleefeld diversified

Diversification was a word that has had special meaning to the people of Kleefeld. To survive, they experimented with various ways of making a living and as a result earned a special spot in the area's history for success in these ventures.

The first cheese factory in Kleefeld, for example, was established in 1888 by P. W. Reimer. A few years later this private venture failed and the farmers in the community took it over as a co-operative enterprise.

At the turn of the century, this building was replaced by a new one. It was the time when cream separators first made their appearance,



The Kleefeld Co-op cheese factory closed for good December 20, 1957. First opened by P. W. Reimer in 1888, the factory had closed a number of times but always re-opened. Reasons for closing it in 1957 were the arrival of New Zealand cheese on the Canadian market and the competition for milk from the Grunthal milk powder plant.

—photo courtesy Levi Schellenberg

so the factory also took in cream which was taken to Otterburne for shipment to Winnipeg.

Again the factory closed down, but again the farmers decided that they must have this important outlet for their surplus milk. In 1917 the factory was re-opened after several years' idleness and operated in 1917-18-19 during the summer only.

After the 1919 season, the factory closed for good. The Mennonites in the area were operating several cheese factories but following the war they shut down, one by one. Kleefeld's factory was the last to close its doors.

Then came the 1930's, the years of the depression and once more Kleefeld farmers turned to cheese as a last hope. There was no market and milk and cream was literally given away.

In 1933 the community decided it would build a cheese factory again. A board was elected which was to sell shares at \$10 each — but it was found that ten dollar bills were scarce, and the shares did not sell unless they were sold on credit. Consequently the shares were sold with a down payment of \$3.00, the balance to be paid in many easy installments.

By this means \$270 in cash was realized. Another \$100 was borrowed from two farmers and with this princely capital, Kleefeld's third cheese factory was built. The boiler, incidentally, was purchased second hand for \$18.

In July, 1933, the factory swung into production. Farmers brought in huge quantities of milk at 50 cents per cwt. and the cheese sold at 11 cents per pound. But even at these ab-

normally low figures the community was lifted out of its financial straits and farmers gradually got back on their feet. During the following years the price of milk gradually increased and several additions had to be made to the factory to take care of increased volume.

Some farmers can still recall that after the cheese factory was established the price of cream jumped from 13 to 20 cents — an indication that the demand became greater when the commodity became scarcer.

The cheese factory operated for 24 years, closing in December, 1957 when competition with the liquid milk market became too keen and it no longer paid to make cheese.

By 1957, however, another industry — poultry — was well established in the area, nurtured by the same co-operative movement that had built the cheese factory.

In 1945 a candling station was added to the co-op holdings at Kleefeld and prepared feeds were handled on the side. Frank Wiebe can recall that on their first day in the feed selling business, they sold only one bag of feed and were a little discouraged. Business picked up, however, and soon there was rapid and continual expansion.

When the co-op decided to move into feeds in a bigger way, it bought the feed mixing and grinding plant formerly owned by D. P. Reimer. Mr. Reimer was hired as foreman to run the plant. Custom grinding and mixing was the main business and still is. The co-op constantly added new equipment right up until the building of the present big modern feed mill. Some of the equipment gradually added included a 30 h.p. electric motor to replace the old tractor previously used, a new Case hammermill and some large bulk feed hoppers.

The purpose of the bulk hoppers was to keep up with the great demand for bulk feed brought about by the concentration on poultry and hogs by district farmers. In the summer of 1957 a 15-ton scale was added. At a special meeting of the shareholders in 1958 the directors asked for and got permission to go ahead with the building of a full sized, completely modern feed handling and mixing mill which would be adequate to handle demands for this kind of service for the foreseeable future. Building began in September.

Community leads in small fruit



Well-known fruit farmer in Kleefeld for many years, H. D. Fast, now retired in Steinbach.

—Carillon News photo

Another area where Kleefeld took the lead in the late 1930's and early 1940's was small fruit farming. Pioneers in this new industry were Jac. Koop, H. D. Fast and Sons and P. K. Schwarz.

Mr. Koop began working with small fruit around 1938 when he started an orchard, expecting to sell apples and plums commercially.

He started with over an acre of apples and another acre of plum trees, crabapples and other fruit trees but in the eight years following he learned that the Manitoba climate was such that his project simply wouldn't work. In addition, the land on which he had started the orchard had a hard gumbo subsoil and many of his trees rotted away. However, these setbacks did not dismay him and he kept adding hardy ornamental shrubs,

different varieties of sandcherries, etc., until he had quite a plantation covering seven or eight acres.

In the meantime he kept on looking for more suitable soil, and in 1946 bought a seven-acre cleared patch about three miles from his original plantation and began a new garden. This time, however, he went into strawberries and raspberries, with fruit trees and shrubs taking a secondary place — as far as money is concerned, at least, this proved the right move, but not as far as his own interest went.

Even though there were only scattered plots in the area where the soil was suitable for small fruit growing, the idea caught on and in 1946 H. D. Fast, his son Arnold and son-in-law Jac. Klierwer planted a large lot to strawberries. Their venture was most successful and by 1950 they had seven acres in strawberries and four acres in raspberries. They installed a sprinkler system in 1949.

P. K. Schwarz was the other member of the "big three" in small fruits in Kleefeld. He also had a plot in strawberries and an outstanding garden where he experimented with flowers and fruit.

The honey capital

Since Biblical times, milk and honey have symbolized the "Promised Land" and the

prosperity that attends ideal agricultural conditions. The district of Kleefeld comes about as close to meeting the requirements of the Promised Land as any place around Manitoba.

On the dairy side, there are other communities ahead of Kleefeld but when it comes to honey, Kleefeld can't be beaten. Of the record six and a half million pounds of honey produced in Manitoba in 1962, for example, 12½ percent, some three quarters of a million pounds, came from the apiaries of Kleefeld producers.

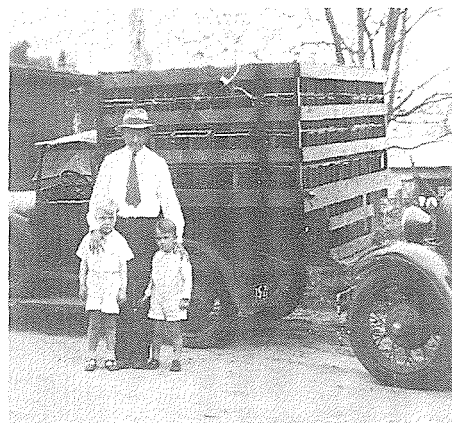
Most of this huge honey output came from bees owned by just eight producers: Ben Dueck, Martin Dueck, Bartel Apiaries, Fast Apiaries, Pete Peters and Sons, P. K. Dueck and P. K. Schwarz and Sons. Between them they supervise about 4,000 colonies of bees each summer.

The bee men at Kleefeld long ago exhausted all the clover supplies in the district and for many years have been boarding a good part of their bees out at widely scattered points in the province. Some have their bees out in the southwestern part of Manitoba between Oak Lake and Virden. Others have them in various parts of southeastern Manitoba and still others up around Riverton and Beausejour. The bees are always placed in heavy clover and alfalfa growing districts. Farmers welcome the bees because they help pollinate the crop. This is especially advantageous if the farmer is raising clover or alfalfa.

Kleefeld school centre of community activities

A fine example of home and school relations has always been found in Kleefeld and the school has been the centre of many community activities over the decades. For many years adults used the school as a centre for their own advancement with weekly meetings consisting of spelling bees, lectures and films.

An example of the excellent community-teacher relations was provided when the local people felt the old teacherage was no longer a suitable residence for the person they had chosen to educate their children. As a result, they asked the principal, Rich-



This is J. R. Schellenberg and the 1934 Model A. Ford pick-up used to haul live bees from Alabama to Kleefeld.

—photo courtesy Levi Schellenberg

ard Reimer to submit his own plans for a new house. The Reimer's did so and this became the first residence in the school district with running water and facilities.

A rare gathering to honour the old school building erected in 1903 took place in the fall of 1948 when oldtime students, teachers and trustees gathered there to reminisce and pay tribute to the old building where they'd learned their early readin', writin' and 'rithmetic.

The building served as a school until 1929. Then, up to 1948, it was used as the teacher's residence. When the new, modern teacherage was completed, the old building was sold and moved away.

It was to exchange fond memories that the oldtimers had gathered and the most popular of the stories retold was the one of the bull. It seems that the bull was just an ordinary bull, except that he had a touch of humour somewhere under a shaggy hide. Ex-students admitted, however, that they had teased him on every opportunity and that this could have had some bearing on his behaviour. As both the school and the bull were located in H. L. Fast's pasture, students had ample opportunity to bait him. One morning he had had just about enough and while students were singing their opening song in the morning, he thrust his head and forelegs through the door and hummed along in a deep bass voice.

Quite a few of the former teachers were able to attend the reunion. That they were not the qualified child specialists of today was their unanimous opinion. Dave Isaac said his only qualifications (above country schooling) had been three months at the Gretna M.C.I. and a good opinion of himself.

Wages were in the vicinity of \$1.50 - \$2.00 per day. Rates were by the day because school terms were of no fixed length. A term generally ran from late fall to the first fine day in spring.

Teachers tried to improve their standing by attending two annual "conferences". The conferences consisted of a meeting of the teachers from neighboring communities. Here they judged their own efforts and went back correcting their shortcomings.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR HERITAGE

The old record proved very interesting. Old H. L. Fast (then aged 83) told how the school was built at a total cost of around \$300 with \$17 going for window and door frames.

Religion

by Mrs. Elsie Kliever

The history of the church, of course, goes back to the very beginning of the Gruenfeld settlement. It was elder Peter Toews who led the church in the migration from Russia to Manitoba in 1874-75. These first settlers were divided into two groups with the smaller group settling near Morris after awhile, where the villages of Rosenort and Rosenhof were founded.

The larger group immediately settled in the East Reserve where five villages were established: Blumenhof, Blumenort, Gruenfeld, Rosenfeld and Steinbach. These two groups were served by one elder who lived in Gruenfeld. On one occasion the elder walked 22 miles to the Red River, where he was then taken by ox cart to the west settlement to baptize young converts.

In the year 1881 a church was being built in Gruenfeld, but it didn't get finished because late that fall John Holdemann came to Manitoba from the U.S. and his powerful preaching brought about a revival in the Kleine Gemeinde churches.

Elder Toews, as well as several ministers and between one-third and one-half of the members left the church and were baptized into the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. Their minister was Abram Isaac



Kleeefeld E.M.C. church dedication service in the summer of 1939.

—photo courtesy Levi Schellenberg

who served the Church of God from its very beginning in 1882 until his death in 1924. Minister John I. Penner was then elected and he is still serving the church in that capacity. The leading minister of this church at present is Rev. C. T. Penner and membership is about 90.

A new school was built in the Gruenfeld village in 1903. This building then also served as a church for the two groups. The Kleine Gemeinde would have services one Sunday and the Church of God the next. The first Kleine Gemeinde minister at that time was Abraham Dueck, the grandfather to Martin Dueck, who still resides here.

In 1907 the Holdemann group built a new church in Hochstadt which was moved to Kleefeld in December, 1917. In 1952 the present Church of God was built.

In the meantime the Kleine Gemeinde group continued to have their services in the new school house. When the Holdemann church was moved to Kleefeld in the fall of 1917, the two churches again had services in the same building with the Kleine Gemeinde using it one Sunday a month. By this time Rev. Henry R. Dueck was the leading minister here and under his leadership the Sunday School was begun, first of all in Steinbach in 1926 and later in the other Kleine Gemeinde churches. The Sunday School was rather frowned upon at first by some of the more conservative members.

By the year 1939, the time had finally come for the Kleine Gemeinde group to build their own church. For 65 years this group had not had its own church building. After Rev. H. R. Dueck's death in 1944, Rev. John R. Friesen was elected as the church leader. Also serving as minister at much the same time was Rev. Peter K. Bartel. In 1952 the Kleine Gemeinde Church changed its name to the Evangelical Mennonite church and its present pastor is Rev. Milton Fast. The church has a membership of 162 people.

Electricity

Through the ingenuity of one man electric lights came into being in Kleefeld long before Manitoba Hydro came in. In 1927 C. S. Fast operated his own little light plant

and though this was merely a number of car batteries with a little gas engine and generator it provided light for several homes and the repair shop.

In 1943, Mr. Fast purchased a 110 volt light plant. This was large enough to provide electricity to the surrounding neighbors and the nearby church for a nominal fee. By 1948 the "Sign of Progress" was very evident and Manitoba Hydro provided electricity to many homes.

Telephone already established by 1907

by Elsie Kliewer

By checking back in an old diary we find that the telephone was well established here by 1907. First of all there were only three subscribers but later the whole community was on one party line and there were more than 30 different ring signals.

In 1926 it was decided to build a telephone line to Steinbach and this was accomplished by the following year. The Holdemann group did not join this new telephone system, however, and kept their own private line with a central station at the Jac. B. Wiebe residence. They had three phones: one on the Steinbach line, one on the private line and one government phone.

If someone on the Steinbach line wanted to speak with someone on the private line he'd have to phone to Wiebe's and they would then phone the party asked for and act as middleman in conveying the messages back and forth.

As all things progressed, the community was divided up into more lines and a local central was installed in the John D. Fast premises. By Dec., 1960 the community was served by the Manitoba Telephone System. Dial phones were installed and all the residents within a half-mile radius of the neat building were privileged to have private phones.

Today (1971) Kleefeld is included in a very large free-dialing area which includes Steinbach, Blumenort, Landmark, Niverville and Grunthal. Long-distance direct dialling was established in 1970.

Water works

Kleefeld has a very good water supply and most of the individual farms have their own artesian wells which are drilled to a depth of about 100 feet. A town water works system was organized and came into being in 1961. Originally there were six connections to this system. In less than six years this had been extended to 20 subscribers and there was room for many more. A neat little cinder block building houses the pressure system and is built over a water reservoir which holds 8,000 gallons of water. This water supply is also available to fire trucks.



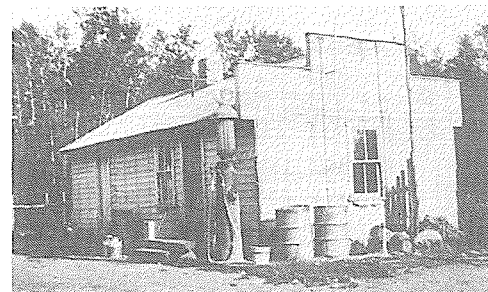
Residents of six Kleefeld village homes and business places who had been carrying water in pails for as long as they could remember, turned their shiny new taps one day in Sept., 1961 and watched clean water run out for the first time. The new village waterworks system replaced the old overflowing well at Kleefeld Co-op and had a capacity to supply up to 20 customers. The town planning committee consisted of Levi Schellenberg, left, K. R. Barkman, right and Abe Martens.

—Carillon News photo

Mail

Up to 1879, Kleefeld mail arrived from Winnipeg but residents were able to change it to Niverville that year and this was much closer. Five years later it was delivered to Hochstadt only a few miles from Kleefeld, where A. Mueller was the postmaster for many years. After some more years Kleefeld Gruenfeld got its own post office. It was at this time that the community changed its name from Gruenfeld to Kleefeld.

Henry L. Fast was the first postmaster here and he served for more than 50 years.



J. R. Schellenberg built Kleefeld's first general store in 1929.

—photo courtesy Levi Schellenberg

24. The first Landmark settlers arrived in 1907

by Mrs. Peter Loewen

On a warm afternoon in the spring of 1907 a large wagon pulled by two tired horses and loaded high with household goods drew to a stop three miles south of the Dawson trail. The horses were tired but the driver seemed as full of energy as a colt just released from a winter's confinement. Here at last was his new farm — a brand new start. As he sprang from his wagon he called enthusiastically to his wife and at her listless response beckoned to the three lads perched on the boxes.

Together they entered the shack standing there. Judging from their exclamations, it was home fit for a king. The goods were deposited in the rough shelter and a temporary home set up.

This family then, my grandparents, the Peter M. Penners, was among the first group of settlers in the Landmark area. They had come from Alberta a few months back but had stayed in town until arrangements were made about the land. Now at last they were on their own farm but without roads, hydro, telephone, and other conveniences we regard as essential today.

Great difficulties were encountered by these early settlers. They were pioneers in the true sense of the word. They had land to clear of trees and bushes though some of it was grassy and easier to work with. The soil was good and readily yielded crops.

Transportation was no real problem; they knew they could not go far, so they did not try. They used their horses and buggies (or trailers) in summer and the same horses and sleighs and cutters in winter. They were six miles from the Lorette railway station and from there they could go anywhere — if they had the money.

Mennonite families from other parts of

Manitoba and some from Europe began settling in the community a few years later and following this influx a store and post office were built. C. K. Plett was the owner. He had a farm besides, which had to be cleared and worked but together with his wife (a daughter of pioneer Rev. H. R. Reimer) and an occasional hired man, they managed the store, post-office and farm. The post office was Landmark, later transferred to Lorette but now back at Landmark.

Schools were a major concern, for there were many children. The first teachers



Mr. and Mrs. Peter M. Penner with son David F. Penner, now one of the oldest residents in Landmark.

—photo courtesy David F. Penner

taught in the church until a school was built. In 1920 a church building was purchased and moved into this community. The people in three school districts, Landmark, Linden, and Willow Ridge came to this church and the community as a whole was given the picturesque name of Prairie Rose. This church group did not include everyone but the majority belonged to it and today it is known as the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Prairie Rose.

Roads were improved as the need arose and in 1929 a cheese factory was built. Many of the farmers had more cows than they needed for their own use so they took the surplus milk to the factory where cheese and butter was made.

In 1946 hydro came to this district, which was the biggest single economic improvement as it led to many manual chores being eliminated or made easier.

Telephone service had been available for many years but it was rather unreliable for many years.

Sports is something the young people have taken to with enthusiasm. The Landmark Dutchmen once made headlines (see sports chapter) and today there is interest in a wide variety of sports. Landmark celebrated the 1967 and 1970 centennials with enthusiastic activities at the Landmark Park and hopes are growing for an arena.

Most of the earlier social activities were connected with the church — sewing circle, bazaars, weddings, young people's activities. Since the collegiate was built the auditorium there is used for films, chamber of commerce banquets and other social functions.

Over the years, many changes have come about. Land is all under cultivation, with only an occasional line of trees along a fence. The beautiful homes and farms reflect the good times and the general prosperity is a monument to the first settlers.

Main settlement came after World War I

Though the Landmark area received its first settlers around 1907 as stated in the preceding story, the main influx did not begin until just after the First World War.

It was at this time that a few families

living in the Blumenort area found they were short of sufficient land for expansion and fathers with growing boys began wondering where their sons would be able to find a livelihood.

One day church elder P. Dueck asked Minister H. R. Reimer why he didn't investigate the "Eakbusch - Heistap" (oakbush hay field) northwest of Blumenort to see whether it wouldn't be worth developing into plough land.

To H. R. Reimer, who had been interested in this area since 1896 this suggestion was an answer to prayer. Supported by church elders, he immediately began making plans for the new settlement.

In 1918 the land in question was thoroughly checked over. Referred to as the "Brettensteppe" (half-breed steppes) because it had been originally reserved for the French half-breeds, the land was low and swampy and many of those coming out to see it turned up their noses at the morass.

Others, however, who knew they could not afford to buy the expensive land further to the west, contacted the owners and then made the final decision to begin a new life in this area.

The settlers weren't only from Blumenort and Blumenhof but from various other Mennonite communities as well. There were Abram and David Plett with their growing sons; Cor. Kroeker, H. W. Reimers and Giesbrechts from Steinbach, Frank Goertzen and sons from Schoensee, and John and Jak. Koop and Rev. H. R. Reimer, Clearsprings and Neuanlage.

The Penners, (Peter, Aron and Abram) mentioned in the preceding article, who had already settled in this area a little further north, were very pleased that brethren of the same faith had decided to settle in the same vicinity.

The first few years were hard ones and the going was pretty rugged because the land was frequently far too wet. But as year after year went by the settlers gradually improved the drainage and as the little community began to blossom somebody got the idea of calling it Prairie Rose. And that was where a little mix-up began that has continued ever since. The settlers had to get their mail from somewhere so C. K. Plett, one of the settlers, was chosen as postmaster and he organized a post

office area to which the government attached the name Landmark. Then a school was formed and a name had to be chosen for it. Somebody suggested Linden and Linden it was.

Later the post office at Landmark was discontinued in favor of a rural mail route operating from Lorette, the nearest railway station. Thus the settlers found themselves living in a community which was known at various times to various people by four different names: Prairie Rose, Landmark, Linden and Lorette.

The four names still persist but in later years more and more people agreed on Landmark. A good deal of credit for putting an end to this confusion belongs to the Landmark Chamber of Commerce.

The modern community

The modern community of Landmark today in no way resembles the low marsh that greeted the first settlers at the turn of the century. Today, hard work and an effective drainage system has turned Landmark into one of the most fertile and prosperous mixed farming areas in the province.

The community's youthful and energetic businessmen have converted Landmark into

a beehive of commerce, little short of astounding for a community of its size. Its places of business have an annual turnover volume that is greater than that of a good many older and larger areas.

Undoubtedly, youthful vigour accounts for a good deal of commercial acumen which is in evidence as one travels up Landmark's main street. A share of the credit also belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Henry S. Reimer who had a hand in the initial stages of at least two of the businesses. Both Mr. and Mrs. Reimer (nee Caroline Penner) had a keen interest in new enterprises and set the stage for the village proper to grow when they opened a grocery, hardware and electrical appliance store and a small plumbing business. Johnny Plett, owner of Landmark Motors, made his first move to locate his business next door to the Reimer's for their mutual benefit. Several years later, the Reimers relinquished their business interests, and the businesses flourished in enlarged proximate premises.

At the south end of the business section is Lincoln Sales and Service which was established in 1958. Well known owner Lincoln Penner has served the community as mun-



Tuesday, August 2, 1960 was a big day at Landmark — the day the post office opened. Captured by the Carillon News camera at the time was this group of patrons who came to get their mail. Left to right are: Jake Wohlgemuth, postmistress Mrs. Kroeker, Norman Kroeker, Archie Plett and John Plett.

icipal councillor for 22 years and has been on the Bethesda Hospital Board for 10.

Also at the end of main street is the Allan Penner Lumber and Hardware Co. Though the offices of this firm burned down in January, 1971 and plans at the time of this writing are not for rebuilding, the business has played an important role in the community's history. In a way, this is Landmark's oldest business because it dates back to Mr. Penner's father, Abram Penner, who, with his sons, operated bush lumber camps as well as a lumber yard.

The business instinct ran strong in the Penner family. At the early age of 20 Allan was already in the road construction business with his brother Aaron, who was 23. When the boys' father passed away in 1953, they took over the lumber yard in addition to their road construction business.

The youthful partners received a staggering blow on Aug. 1, 1955 when a fire swept through and completely destroyed their lumber yard. In the spring of the following year, however, Allan, this time operating alone, rebuilt the office and yard. To help finance this venture, he sold his interest in the construction business. The firm had grown to become one of the largest in the community at the time of the January, 1971 fire.

Driving down the street, the next business is that of the Landmark Feed Mill. One of the most vital services offered in this farm centre, the plant was built in 1954 by the Wohlgemuth brothers, Jake and Ben. A passer-by viewing this substantial and solidly constructed mill would find it difficult

to believe that only 16 years back, this land was a sugar beet field.

As the surplus of Canadian wheat continued to pile up in vast unwanted quantities at the Lakehead and in elevators in the 1950's farmers in the intensive farming area at Landmark turned increasingly to dairy cattle, poultry, and hogs, as their source of livelihood. The true value of this trend, in terms of community service, may possibly never be fully measured.

Through the services offered by this mill, farmers can have their grains converted into balanced rations and enjoy one of the best quality services in the country.

Possibly the best known of Landmark's businesses is Landmark Motors, which began in 1947. Owned and operated by John Plett, its reputation for prompt service and reliable dealing have spread far beyond the immediate community. Key to its success is perhaps the character of its owner, John Plett. Mr. Plett was still a boy when he got into the repair business; besides being a born mechanic, he is a pilot, businessman and hunter.

The Landmark General Store, a modern, air-conditioned building serving the larger community, is owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Kroeker. The Kroekers had purchased it from Archie Plett, who had bought it from Ralph Reimer. Ralph had purchased the business from Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Reimer and built a new store at the present location. Mr. and Mrs. Kroeker have been the owners since 1957 and have built a larger, more convenient store since then.

Up until they purchased the store, the Kroekers farmed 80 acres close to Landmark and Norman supplemented their income by working at the Vulcan Iron Works in Winnipeg.

Archie Plett is the oldest businessman in Landmark with his plumbing and heating enterprise. After going into this business in 1957, his first undertaking was the sizeable chore of placing all Landmark's residences and businesses on a water pressure system. Landmark Plumbing and Heating now employs eight or nine full time people and has accepted work in many areas of the province.



This sign on the outskirts of the community has exemplified the philosophy of Landmark and its residents. The town's youthful and energetic businessmen converted Landmark into a busy centre of trade and commerce.

—Carillon News photo

Landmark—a dormitory community

The Eastern-Manitoba Development Corporation has a term "Dormitory community" to describe the trend emerging in communities within a reasonable commuting distance from the City of Winnipeg. Landmark is located well within this radius and is probably typical of a dormitory community.

The Landmark Chamber of Commerce president, Dan Giesbrecht is himself a commuter. Mr. Giesbrecht drives in to Winnipeg every working day to his trucking firm headquarters, Mark Transport, which he owns in partnership with Arnold Reimer. Both Mr Reimer and Mr Giesbrecht have keen interests in community development even though their place of employment is not in their home community. Mr Reimer serves as local trustee on the Hanover School Board.

The proximity of a big city to Landmark has been an advantage to Landmark youth. Many have found employment opportunities in Winnipeg while continuing to be involved with church, social, and sports activities in Landmark.

Young people often seem to prefer living in Landmark after marriage, and occasionally a family is attracted back to the home community after having lived elsewhere. Wilmer Penner, an instructor at the University of Winnipeg and his wife have settled on a farm in Landmark, preferring the quiet countryside to city streets to raise their family.

Other Landmark residents have gone further away from home to earn extra income while continuing to make their home in Landmark. For many years, the brothers Abe, David, Norman and Walter Penner were sawmill operators in either eastern or northern Manitoba during the winter months. And both Archie Plett and Allan Penner have made contracts in the building construction trade in northern Manitoba while keeping their firms' head offices in Landmark.

Another interesting observance regarding Landmark families is the way in which several groups of families have settled elsewhere. About a dozen families, originating in Landmark, moved to the Kola area near Virden in

the late 1950's and early '60's. While most of them purchased land to farm, thriving industries other than farming were soon established.

Several families from Winnipeg have moved into the community as well, simply to live in the country although they had no previous connection in Landmark.

Landmark school history

by Mrs Ed. Barkman

Education in the Landmark area had its beginning in the first Prairie Rose **Kleine Gemeinde** church. When the first settlers moved into the area, the school districts were not yet organized and there were no schools. Rev. Henry Reimer, consequently, undertook to provide some education for the children and as the law regarding qualified teachers was not yet enforced, used the church on weekdays as a school.

By 1925 the school districts were organized and schools had to have qualified teachers. In the fall of the same year, before the house that was to become the Landmark school was ready, P.J.B.Reimer and Dietrich Toews, the new teachers, did some team teaching in the church. Later, when the school was ready, Mr Toews moved into there with the Landmark pupils. Mr Reimer continued teaching in the church until the fall of 1926 when the Linden school was ready and the whole class was transferred to the new school.

Two other teachers who taught for only one year before moving on to other places were John Wohlgemuth and Felix Sauer. After these two, Jacob Friesen taught for nine years. This was during the depression and in those times, if you had a place where you were reasonably sure of earning your daily bread, you stayed put.

The Landmark folk must have been an optimistic people as they built a new school during the depression years in 1935 or 36 and then built an addition to make a two-classroom school in 1939. Maybe it was a case of absolute necessity as teacher Isaac Fast had an enrollment of 58 pupils in eight grades.

The Friesen's moved to B.C. later and Isaac Fast was the new teacher for several years.



The Landmark Dutchmen, around 1959. In their heyday these fellows put Landmark on the map in a big way. Back row: Edmer Reimer, Murray Barkman, Alfred Toews, Carl Derksen. Middle row: Raymond Plett, Arnold Hildebrand, Victor Reimer, Dennis Penner, Leonard Barkman, Rick Bangart, Eddy Hildebrand and Victor Hildebrand. Front: Peter Plett, Harry Friesen, Bob Giesbrecht, Louey Plett, John Braun and Kenneth Penner.

—Carillon News photo

He later froze to death in a violent snowstorm near Niverville in the spring of 1941.

Victor Peters and Betty Loewen were the first teachers in the new double school. Mr Peters continued his studies in Germany, and then later became a professor and author in the U.S.A.

High school classes were taught in Landmark for the first time in 1951 - 52. Up to that time students could take grades nine and ten by correspondence or attend a high school in another community. In 1951 the teacherage was converted into a high school and the first high school teacher was a local man, Vernon Reimer, who had received his education by correspondence and attending school in Gretna (Mr Reimer later became well known as Mennonite Central Committee director of relief work in India and Pakistan).

The teacherage burned down before the year was ended but they moved into the school basement and finished the year there. Another teacherage was bought and later converted into a high school.

The pupils complained of being roasted on one side and frozen on the other by the tin stove and the teacher complained about the difficulty of having his desk in one room and teaching his class through the doorway in the other room, so the people concerned were starting to make definite plans for improve-

ment. The late John J. Hildebrand exceeded all others in getting the new modern Landmark Collegiate we have now.

Mr Hildebrand died suddenly of a heart attack in Nov., 1965. At the time of his death he was director for Area No. 1 of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and vice-chairman of the Hanover School Division board. He had served 14 years on the elementary school board at Landmark and held this post along with his position on the Hanover school board up to 1964.

Prairie Rose Church

by Mrs Ed Barkman

Special recognition is due to the ministers of the past and present who have helped so much in developing our district, especially the founder and first pastor of the E.M.C. in Prairie Rose, Rev. Henry R. Reimer.

When the first settlers started moving to Prairie Rose from Blumenort and Steinbach, Rev. Reimer's pioneering spirit led them. With seven sons and six daughters, carving a successful farm out of the virgin prairie may have seemed a less formidable task to him than to some others but Mrs Reimer must have had some misgivings because her hus-

band had to promise to build the same kind of house they had in Blumenort. This he did and he must have done it well for it is still standing and occupied by their youngest daughter, Elsie (Mrs. John Hildebrand and her family).

A big house was a necessity for them. In those horse and buggy days anybody coming to church from the outlying districts had to have a place to go to for dinner and the preacher's house was the most natural place.

On Saturdays, Mrs Reimer and the girls filled a three gallon stone crock with plummi mos, cooked a great big pot of potatoes, cooked a home-cured ham, and baked a huge batch of bread and buns. Sometimes their hospitality was extended to keeping overnight guests.

I remember one time an old couple wanted to stay a few nights and the girls were quite apprehensive that they would have to give up their room. They were reprimanded by one of their brothers who asked how they would feel when they were old and had no place to stay? The tables were turned when he found out he should give up his room. Dietrich found out it is easier to preach than to practice that time. The Reimers were known far and wide for their hospitality.

The first settlers to settle in this district were the Peter Koops, John D. Barkmans, Peter F. Loewens, Frank T. and Peter T. Kroekers and Jac. H. W. Reimers in 1919, and the Henry R. Reimers, C. K. Pletts and a few other families in 1920. The Peter and Abram M. Penners were here before.

I am happy to say that Prairie Rose has never been without a place to worship since the H. Reimers were here. During the first few months services were held in their home, and then the first little church was moved to the same site the church stands on now. The land was donated by Rev. Reimer. Church services were not held every Sunday as

the Church of God in Christ sometimes used it for their services too.

Every family had a church calendar to tell them when there would be a service. I remember one time when our hired girl was quite put out when Mother wanted her to wash the floor when there was no church on Sunday. They washed their floors by the church calendar.

Rev. Henry R. Reimer was preacher and caretaker the first years. He received a \$25 a month salary for teaching but never accepted anything for the other jobs. P.J.B. Reimer took over the teaching about 1925. The last year school was held in the church was in 1926 - 27.

The first couple to get married in the church were Mr and Mrs Abram D. Reimer, in 1923. The first funeral was held for Mr and Mrs Peter Loewen's little baby in December, 1920. Mr. C. K. Plett was the first usher and Mr. David K. Plett the first song leader.

Suzanne Plett was the first missionary to go out to a foreign field from our district. She left in the spring of 1945 and served in South America till the time of her death.

The membership increased and in 1944 the old church was sold and a bigger one built. This church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground on June 27, 1963. The new church was dedicated on January 5, 1964.

Ministers that have been elected and ordained to serve in the E.M.C. are Rev. Ben D. Reimer in December, 1941, Rev. Frank D. Reimer on September 9, 1945, Rev. Abe P. Unger on June 24, 1951, Rev. Vernon Reimer on May 9, 1958, Rev. Pete Gunther on February 22, 1959 and Rev. Harvey Plett on July 26, 1959.

Rev Vernon Reimer is serving as M.C.C. field director in India at present. The Pete Gunther family moved to Abbotsford, B.C. in October, 1966.

25. Niverville

Named after a French nobleman, planned by a German diplomat, settled by German Mennonites, English and Scottish farmers, helped along by French Canadians and partly developed by Jews — this is Niverville.

The community owes its beginning to an intriguing man — William Hespeler — who came from a respected and influential family in Baden-Baden, Germany. Well educated for his time, he came to Canada at the age of 19 in 1849 and married a Scottish Canadian girl. He was later appointed German consul to western Canada and developed an intense interest in colonizing the rich prairie lands.

While visiting his relatives and family in Germany in 1871, he heard about the big group of German-speaking Mennonites in South Russia and their interest in moving to Canada. He contacted the Canadian government which appointed him to go to Russia and bring back a delegation of Mennonites to Manitoba to look over the country.

Following considerable effort, Mr. Hespeler achieved this goal and after showing a delegation the area in 1873, 274 Mennonite families arrived in the East Reserve in the summer of 1874. The first boatload stepped ashore just three miles west and a little south of the present village of Niverville.

The spot can still be seen today. The settlers — there were 18 families — walked across the steamer's gangplank which the crew had placed across the water to the high east bank of the Red River about one-half mile north of the mouth of the Rat River.

The settlers stayed in temporary immigration buildings about three miles south of Niverville. The first boatload then moved on east and settled at Gruenfeld, now known as Kleefeld.

More Mennonites arrived in the following

years and settlements sprang up in this area like crocuses.

Mr. Hespeler had a big hand in the successful settlement of these Mennonites and became a respected middleman between the government and the Mennonites. But he was also a businessman and a promoter and he soon realized that the growing settlement of the East Reserve needed a trading centre. When the first railway line in Manitoba, the Pembina Branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed, it ran north to south alongside the west border of the Reserve for a distance of six miles.

Mr. Hespeler saw the opportunity of establishing a rail centre for the entire area and before winter came, had acquired the future townsite of Niverville. In November, 1878 he had the village surveyed by William Pierce, a well known surveyor.

Niverville had nine streets running east-west and they were named Ludwig, Kornton, Bes-cary, Georgina, Alfred, Mary, Kaiser (translated from German meaning King) and Pierce. The north-south streets were named Railway, Stephanie, Market, Barbara, George and Eberstein. The town plan was nearly twice as big as it is today and there were plans for a park, a cemetery and a 280 foot square market place.

The community was named by the Canadian Pacific Railway in honor of Chevalier Joseph Boucher de Niverville, an officer in the company of Legardeur de St. Pierre who succeeded La Verendrye as commander of France's western trading posts.

First grain elevator in Western Canada built in 1878

Work on the first grain elevator to be constructed in western Canada was begun by Mr. Hespeler in 1878. Mennonite farmers earned some badly-needed money hauling the timbers for this construction and John Wittick, founder of one of Niverville's best-known pioneer families, was the man who built and then also operated the elevator for many years.

The elevator, completed in 1879, was located a few hundred feet from Kaiser Street (later Main Street) on the east side of the railroad tracks. The cylindrically-shaped elevator looked a little like a silo only it was made much larger and built of extra-high quality wood brought in by steamboat from Moorehead on Red River boats.

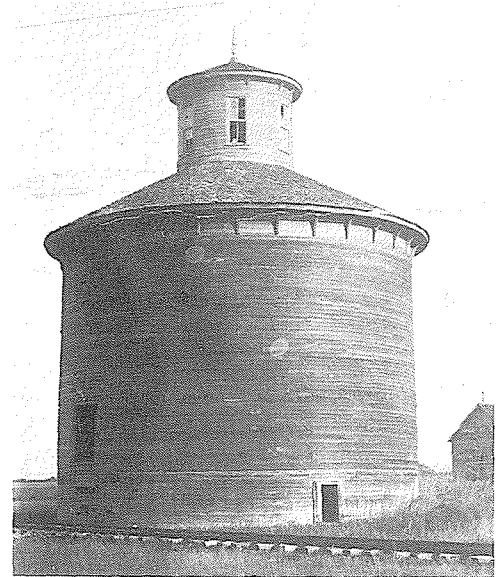
The elevator held 25,000 bushels, used an elevator system of metal cups fastened on a 10-inch belt and was powered by two horses.

The elevator had one of its busiest periods during the Northwest Rebellion in 1885 when oats was in big demand to feed the Army horses being used in Saskatchewan in the fighting against Riel. It was broken down in 1920 by a farmer from Otterburne though it hadn't been used for a long time prior to that.

* * *

After several years in operation the owners of Niverville's first store, Erdman Penner¹ and Otto Schultz, left the community. Mr. Penner went on to open the first store in the West Re-

1. The same Mr. Penner, in partnership with Mr. Schultz made history when they shipped the first commercial shipment of grain in western Canada — 5,000 bushels — from Niverville in 1879. The grain was destined for export to Europe via Duluth, Minnesota. Mr. Penner was a Mennonite and Mr. Schultz a German Canadian from Ontario. The two men had started the first store in the East Reserve at Tannenau in 1876 and moved it to Niverville several years later.



Western Canada's first grain elevator which was built in Niverville in 1879. The 25,000-bushel elevator was situated a few hundred feet from Kaiser Street (now Main Street). William Hespeler was responsible for construction of the wooden structure which was made of timbers brought in by steamboat from Moorhead, Minnesota. The elevator served the community for over 40 years until it was torn down in 1920.

—photo courtesy N. A. Wittick



The tennis court in Niverville in 1909. The scene, facing south, also shows the old schoolhouse.

—photo courtesy C. Church



A portion of Niverville's business area in 1900 showing the old hotel and the Penner Brothers general store.

—photo courtesy C. Church



John Wittick who in 1879 began building Western Canada's first grain elevator in Niverville. Mr. Wittick, founder of one of the community's pioneer families, also operated the elevator for many years.

—photo courtesy N. A. Wittick



The Niverville Hotel around 1910 owned by the Robert family. This hotel for many years served as a stopover for rail travellers and at one time also had a branch of the Hochelaga Bank. Fire destroyed the building in the early 1920's and the hotel was never rebuilt.

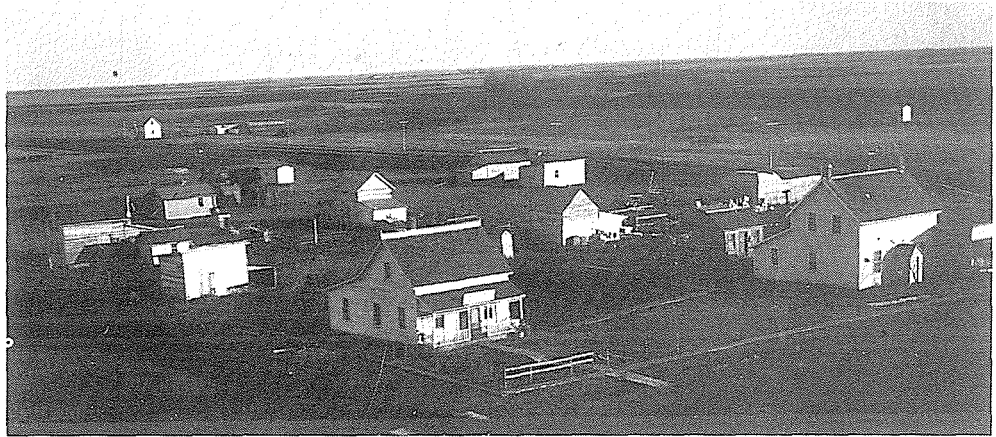
—photo courtesy N. A. Wittick

serve, at Neuanlage and became Gretna's first mayor in 1883. Mr. Schultz also moved to Gretna but it is not known whether he went into business with Mr Penner again or operated on his own.

The store at Niverville changed hands many times after the two founders left.

The first hotel in Niverville was built in 1879. It was granted a liquor license in 1882 and used until around 1905 when it was rebuilt into a store by Penner Bros. Later, a lean-to was added to accommodate the post office.

The second hotel was built around the time the first one became a store and was used as a



The village of Niverville in 1911 viewed from the grain elevator.

—photo courtesy N. A. Wittick

stopover by passengers travelling on the railroad. For around three years, from 1919-21 the Hochelaga Bank rented office space in the hotel. The building burned down in 1922 and was never rebuilt.

Learning came first

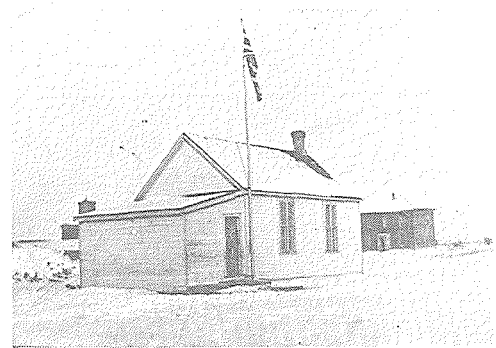
by Mrs. Joyce Church

Schooling at Niverville began in the "wooden era" when the physical aids to education were the log schoolhouse and the hickory stick. It was before the days of regular school districts.

On May 8, 1884 a public meeting was called at Niverville by J. B. Somerset, superintendent of education. Ratepayers and householders attended and elected a board of trustees and a district auditor.

The following year the School Amendments Act was passed and the Board of Education assigned to the school the distinctive name and number: "Niverville School District No. 315".

Members of the first school board were John Wittick, John Harrison and John Hiebert, however, over the first five years, names changed and other names had appeared by 1890. These were Gerhard Kliewer, T. W. Craven, William Wallace and John Church. S. Lawson was the first secretary-treasurer.



Niverville's first school house built in 1884 at a total cost of \$643 including purchase of the site. The building measured 18 by 26 feet and had a plastered 12-foot ceiling. The first teacher was Miss C. Barnes and the schoolhouse was used until 1911.

—photo courtesy C. Church

First school teacher

Miss C. Barnes was the first school teacher at Niverville. She was hired from June 1, 1884 to January 1, 1885 with no vacation during that period and a salary of \$35 a month. Vacations were taken in the winter in those days. Prior to this there were other teachers but no available records. The school was a log cabin located west of the present United Church.

A meeting was called in May, 1884 to consider raising or borrowing money to buy a school site, put up a building and buy school

supplies. The meeting empowered the District to issue debentures up to the value of \$1,000. To raise further funds, a levy of \$650 was placed on the municipalities.

The school house was built in 1884. It measured 18 by 26 feet. Spruce, pine and tamarac were used inside the building. It had four windows and a brick chimney. First-grade cedar was used for the outside. The ceiling was 12 feet high and the walls were plastered. The foundation posts were of cedar and sunk five feet into the ground. The contract was awarded to Robert Fisher for \$560. The school site cost \$83.

The second teacher at this school was L. Bridge who was paid \$30 a month and then Irene Ritchie who received \$42.50 a month in 1886. By 1908 the enrollment was up to 19 and A. L. Young, the inspector of schools, strongly recommended a new school building. In 1910 the ratepayers defeated a by-law for a \$2,000 school by three votes.

At another vote, taken in 1911, the money by-law passed by a seven vote majority. The votes were taken at special meetings. As the result of the by-law a new cement block school was built in 1911-12 and the old one sold a little later. The new school cost \$3,000.

In 1916, A. Weidenhammer, inspector of schools, recommended that the school be partitioned, that two teachers be engaged and that the school district be enlarged by consolidation. Nothing was done about this until 1928 at which time a second school was built to accommodate the increasing number of students. Albert Wit-tick had become the secretary-treasurer of the district in 1908 and he held this job right until 1947 — a record of 40 consecutive years of service.

Second-hand building purchased

In the early 1940's a second-hand building was bought to handle the growing student body. All three schools stayed in use until 1947 when a new four classroom school was built.

This building burned down on December 17, 1960 and this brought about the question of consolidation again. In 1961, with the help of Inspector K. Jasper, consolidation took place and a new six-classroom school was built at a cost of \$135,000.

The first five-man board of trustees elected consisted of: W. G. Leppky, chairman; Isaak Braun, vice-chairman; W. W. Dyck; P. Koslowsky, Jr., and J. J. Peters, board members and Mrs Joyce Church as secretary-treasurer.

The churches



This was Niverville's first church around 1907. Built by Presbyterians, it was also used by the Mennonite settlers for their services. In 1925 the Presbyterian church joined the United Church of Canada.

—photo courtesy C. Church

The early English-speaking settlers in the Niverville district came to a country where there were no English schools or churches but it wasn't long before a log school house was built which also served as a place to worship. Alexander McFarlane of the Clearsprings church would come to Niverville once a month and he served the congregation from 1885 until 1904.

The church was Presbyterian then and remained so until 1925 when it joined the United Church of Canada. The second minister was J. B. Clyde. Under his guidance the first church was built in 1907 and named the Niverville Presbyterian Church. By that time services had been held for 22 years in the schoolhouse.

Up until the 1930's two other church denominations used the Presbyterian Church for their services. By 1947 three Mennonite churches had been built to serve the growing Mennonite population.

The community grew slowly

But Niverville did not grow as quickly as Mr. Hespeler expected for a number of reasons. The wet years of 1878-82 drove many of the Mennonite farmers to the West Reserve and the marshes and low land between Niverville and the other Mennonite communities discouraged trade. By 1878, the road to the Winnipeg market was already a familiar one to the Mennonite settlers and Niverville was unable to divert the flow of trade away from the city.

Niverville was also without a grist mill and despite all the planning and the enthusiastic reports of Niverville as a new growth centre in the Winnipeg papers, it was Steinbach that emerged as the trade centre of the Mennonite settlement rather than Niverville.

Though the Scottish-English settlers such as Church's and the Harrison's began to move onto the good farmland around Niverville around 1882, it took until after 1900, with better drainage and roads, before Niverville really grew.

In the same period, however, people with a wide variety of nationalities came to be represented and some of these hardy pioneers made great contributions to the community. One of the most outstanding families was the Bronstone family. Everyone who was connected with Niverville from the turn of the century on knew about the Bronstone's.

Nobody could recall for certain, but it was either in 1901 or 1902 when Hersch Bronstone, a Jewish peddler first appeared in the district. He travelled with a democrat and team and sold anything that the settlers were likely to need. He restricted his travels to the Mennonite districts east of the railroad track because he spoke some German and little English at the time.

Around 1904 he bought out a small store in Niverville owned by a Mr. Serkau and discontinued the wagon delivery. The Bronstones followed the pioneer pattern in raising a fair-sized family — four boys and two girls. While Mrs. Bronstone joined the Presbyterian Ladies Sewing Circle and became one of the group's most industrious seamstresses, all the children pitched in with local activities.

Max was one of the founders of Niverville Community Club and was instrumental in purchasing the old grain warehouse for a com-

munity hall in 1928. He later became one of Toronto's bigger financiers.

Hyman Bronstone became the successor to his father's business and put his shoulder to the wheel to develop the town. He founded the district Credit Union and wrote out the notices calling the first public meeting to discuss the project. When the curling rink was built in 1952 he donated the land and bought the first \$500 worth of shares.

During the Second World War Hyman Bronstone entered the lumber business and more and more of his efforts were directed here. In 1952 he sold out his grocery business and enlarged his lumber yard. By 1956 he was selling so much lumber to Winnipeg that he moved the business there. Mr. Bronstone passed away in 1958.

Farm service key to business success

Realizing many years ago that farm service was the key to business success in Niverville, business leaders such as Wm. Dyck, Jakob Wiens and W. G. Leppky enjoyed increased prosperity as the community grew.

By 1947 Niverville had a population of around 350 and most residents were Mennonite, a change from 20 years previous. By far the majority of the town's business places were now on King Street although a few were still located on other blocks. The residential area consisted of about six or eight small blocks. The majority of the streets had cement sidewalks but the old boardwalks were still evident as well. One lament of a visitor to the community in the 1940's was that there was a lack of shade trees.

Many town folk kept a cow or two and everyone had a garden. The town's oldest business was the Niverville Trading and Lumber Co. which was begun by Mr. Bronstone in 1904. The general store and lumber yard employed six men regularly.

A cold storage plant was opened in 1946 and two up-to-date garages and several food stores served the community's needs. There was also a cafe and a post office which was located in one of the general stores.

Mixed farming was definitely the industry of the district with products ranging from grain and livestock to sugar beets, milk and honey.

Even though much of the grain was taken directly to Winnipeg by truck or stored on the farms, the lone elevator operated by the Ogilvie Flour Milling Co. was unable to cope with the fall harvest.

Another growth period for Niverville was marked in the post-war years when it became more established as a trade centre and the family businesses continued to prosper.

An active Chamber of Commerce also made its contribution to everyday life in the district, organizing such medical conveniences as medical service and other projects that could not be promoted individually. The community also set up its own financial institution in the form of a credit union.

Though there are many other men who contributed greatly to the growth of the community, no man, in recent history, probably did more for Niverville than William Dyck.

Amazingly, he got his start in business as a 13-year-old boy during the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia when he was at a private school far from home. Forced to fend for him-

self, Mr. Dyck first sold a few of his textbooks and then became a most successful bookseller after finding many old editions in an elderly couple's attic. This took Mr. Dyck through an entire year of school.

When the Germans invaded the Ukraine in 1918 Mr. Dyck was back at his parents' home. With much of the German population starving back home, the soldiers were sending home parcels of food to Germany by the carload and Mr. Dyck got into the business of supplying boxes for packing.

Surviving many bitter experiences in the Russian Revolution Mr. Dyck was finally able to come to Canada. After seven years on a farm here with a small grocery store as a sideline, this venture ended in financial disaster in the "Dirty Thirties".

Following this he made a small loan and went into bee-keeping. He soon had 400 colonies and this was quite a profitable venture until 1939 when the bottom fell out of the honey prices.

Again Mr. Dyck looked for something to do



January 6, 1969 was a historic day for Niverville as the village's first mayor and councillors were sworn in. Left to right are councillors Alfred Bergman, Alvin Podjan, Waldemar Pauls, David Stoesz and Mayor William Kuzenko. Performing the swearing-in ceremony is acting secretary-treasurer John Schellenberg. "Today is the birth of a new chapter in the history of our town....," Mr Kuzenko said in an address following the ceremony. The mayor and council members were elected December 11, 1968.

and began investigating the possibilities of a small hatchery. He was soon sold on the idea and shortly thereafter, Dyck's Electric Hatchery was in business.

The hatchery was launched in a small chicken barn with one 3,000 chick incubator but regular advertisements in the **Steinbach Post** brought in many customers from far and near and the business grew.

It wasn't always smooth sailing for this tall slim man who applied the principles he preached from the pulpit of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Niverville to his business. One spring, when he was ill, a peculiar problem came up for which he had no solution. It happened that he had one very good but fussy customer who always purchased his chicks for April 15. Due to illness, no chicks had been hatched and Mr. Dyck didn't know what to say to him. When the customer came in on April 15, Mr. Dyck was prepared for the worst and thought that his best customer was lost. But an amazing thing occurred — the man said that due to illness of his wife and children he would be unable to take delivery as he had done for years on his favorite chicken date.

William Dyck's modest 300 chick incubator grew into a corporation which produced a quarter-million top-grade chicks per year and

the business branched out into other lines as well. Mr. Dyck and other members of his family expanded into hardware, lumber and finally the contracting business and the Dyck's became better known as builders than hatchery operators.

A man who has built up a large family business, Mr. Dyck's contribution to the community also involves many years of unselfish community service in the church and school.

Incorporation

Incorporation of Niverville in January, 1969 marked a milestone for the community and opened the door to a new spirit of growth. Empowered to collect its own taxes and manage its own affairs, council, after a year of organization, found its footing and embarked on an ambitious development program that saw the community receive sewer and water installation, lay down plans for a senior citizens housing project and institute parallel parking.

This, together with enlarged school facilities and growth of some existing businesses bode well for the economic future of the community.

26. The first Ukrainians came in 1896

"Much of the rough work of nation building in Western Canada is being done by the despised Galician. The unskilled labor for which contractors and railway builders have been loudly calling is principally by the Galician. In the cities and towns, where new works are being pushed to rapid completion, or out on the farthest stretches of the prairie where the steel is being laid for the coming settler can be found the grimy, stolid Galician, puffing his ever-present cigarette and working with a physical endurance bred of centuries of peasant life and an indifference to hardships that seem characteristic of the Slav."

—J.S. Woodworth, 1908, in
"Strangers within our Gates"

The first Ukrainians to come to this province were drawn by reports of free land received by the Mennonites who had been neighbors with the Ukrainians in southern Russia.

A large group of Ukrainian settlers arrived in Winnipeg in 1899 and were given land in the Stuartburn district south of the East Reserve where some other Ukrainians had already settled in previous years, beginning in 1896.

Not all went to Stuartburn, however. At least one settler chose a spot in the southern part of the East Reserve instead and in the spring of 1900, several hundred others followed him, moving from Stuartburn to Township 5, Range 6, which was then thinly settled by French Canadians.

Although the soil was sandy, strewn here and there with boulders and covered with bush, eager newcomers took up their homesteads gladly.

Pioneering was very difficult. There were no material means, no farm implements nor any livestock. Some families had less than a dollar to start a new life. New customs, unfamiliar

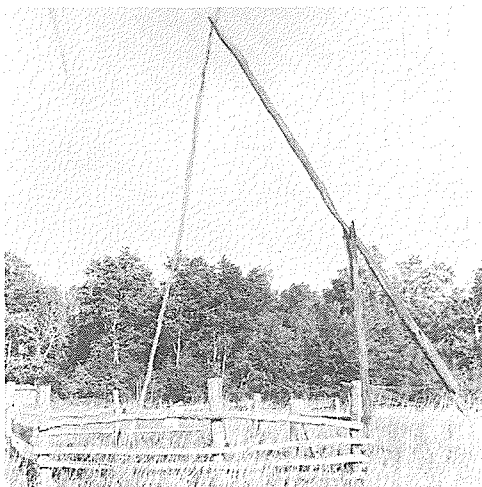
language, and the surrounding wilderness had a depressing effect upon the new colony.

Fortunately some of the more active members of the settlement became acquainted with the Mennonites at Grunthal, especially with businessman Johan Braun, later reeve and a generous man. He understood the Ukrainian language and listened sympathetically to their hard luck. The Ukrainian visitors never left his home empty handed. He advanced money, gave cattle on easy payments and with kind advice encouraged them in their endeavors. Many settlers looked upon him as their adopted father.

As the young settlement became established, mothers with their children were left on the homesteads to tend to gardens and to make hay with a sickle or scythe while their men went in search of work. Some worked on the railroads while others went harvesting around Ste. Elizabeth, Arnaud and Dominion City. They all returned home for winter with earnings which were to clothe their families and to buy a supply of flour, sugar, coffee and lard.

Although the first winter was long and cold, it did not keep men indoors. Dressed as warmly as they could, men with their sons went into the neighboring township (Seventh they called it) to cut logs for their more permanent homes and tamarack cord-wood for firewood or for sale at the Steinbach Flour Mills. Money procured from wood was spent on necessities or to pay for oxen bought from the French around St. Pierre or from the Mennonites in Grunthal.

At first there was no church in the district. Settlers spent their Sundays and religious holidays at home resting from their hard toil, or went visiting their neighbors, chatting about their success and failures and planning their future. The young folks arranged dances in



This method of obtaining well water with two long poles—a pail at one end and a weight at the other—usually identified the Ukrainian communities.

the more spacious houses and cymbals and fiddles supplied the music. Life routine began to take shape.

In 1901, 1902, and 1903 more immigrants of the Ukrainian origin joined their neighbors and relatives from the Old Land and settled alongside on unoccupied homesteads. The older settlers helped the new ones to establish themselves. Here and there small patches of wheat, oats, and barley could be seen waving in the summer breeze. In the fall, threshing outfits were moved from place to place to thresh the grain.

As the material conditions improved, the lack of a church became more apparent. These farmers were Greek Catholic and to be without a church was no life. Consequently plans for a church at Sarto were made by M. Chubey, Michael Kohut, John Dechtiar, Anton Novak, Wasyl Rekrut, Wasyl Muchanik and others and in 1903 a new church was built. Whenever a travelling priest visited the parish, young and old took part in church services. Especially great was the rejoicing at Easter when a solemn Mass was sung by all in a well-decorated church. In the afternoon the younger generation would take part in singing spring songs or "haivki".

Sarto first called New York

In the early days of the settlement the French Canadians called Sarto New York but the name did not take root — it was lost when in 1904 the Dominion Department of Postal Service established a post office at Michael Kohut's house. The post office was named Sarto in honor of Pope Pius X del Sarto. Many years later, Trentham Post Office was established to serve the eastern part of the township.

Education was in the hands of the families. In every corner of the settlement a man was hired to teach the three R's in Ukrainian. Such improvised schools were temporary affairs, held in houses where children sat around the table reading from primers printed in the Old Land. Though the education was very elementary, it enabled the students to read Ukrainian papers which began to appear in Winnipeg and to write letters to their relatives in Europe.

In 1912 the provincial Department of Education sent an organizer to form school districts. Three districts were created: Sarto, Willow Plains and Slawna. Soon school buildings were built and open for classes. At first schools were operated sporadically, a few months a year on account of a lack of teachers but as the time went on, more qualified teachers of Ukrainian origin appeared and children were instructed in English and Ukrainian.

In the late fall of 1913, the church was completely destroyed by fire and a new one was erected opposite the Willow Plains school. This was really the beginning of the village of Sarto. In 1920 a group of progressive farmers organized a local educational society. The Society built a hall at Sarto to house a well-selected library and a stage for the dramatic plays presented by local talent. Dances were held for the young people regularly.

In the meantime, a general store appeared in the little village and later when the post office was moved to Harry Smuk's, a little grocery store was opened by him as well. Both stores, however, only traded on a small scale as the bulk of the business went to large stores



Some of the later pioneers of the Sarto district at a dinner held in their honor Nov. 1970.

at Steinbach and Grunthal where farmers could sell their products and buy all the necessities of life.

Arriving as they did after the English settlers and the Mennonites, the Ukrainian people had to be content with the poorest land in the municipality. They were further hindered by a lack of roads and agricultural know-how. De-

spite terrific hardships they raised their families and tightened their belts to await better times which were a long time coming.

As more settlers arrived in the area, several other small Ukrainian settlements, notably Trentham and Pansy, were established but these remained cross-roads settlements only.

27. Lord Dufferin's visit in 1877 and others

Countless milestones and landmarks in the history of the East Reserve have already been described in the preceding pages of this history but several stories, of a different nature, remain. These stories deal with the occasions when, though perhaps only fleetingly, the community of Steinbach or events surrounding it, made headlines all over the country or dealt with a very special occasion that perhaps wasn't of national significance but of great importance to the people of the community and area.

The visit of Lord Dufferin —August 21, 1877

The first such occasion was marked August 21, 1877 when the young colony was honored with a visit by the Right Honorable Frederick Temple, Earl of Dufferin and Governor-General of Canada.

The tour to the East Reserve was part of a general visit to western Canada that year and arranged by Wm. Hespeler who had represented the federal government and the Mennonites in immigration and settlement matters.

The Earl of Dufferin was accompanied by Lady Dufferin and the visit was considered a tremendous compliment to the Mennonite settlement.

A great excitement ran through the whole area prior to the visit. The date was set for August 21 and the local authorities proclaimed a special holiday, the first of its kind. (Only on

one other occasion since then has a local municipal and village holiday been declared. That was August 1, 1934 on the occasion of the 60th year of settlement.)

The place selected for the official welcome was about eight miles west of Steinbach near the present No. 52 highway turn-off to Kleefer. A big dome of evergreens had been placed off the main road leading from Winnipeg into the Reserve where the esteemed visitors were expected to arrive. A shaded stand had been erected in the forenoon which was decorated with wild flowers of which there always were a great abundance on the virgin prairie. A big selection of homegrown vegetables had also been arranged at the place.

Before the time of arrival, some of the young men went a few miles ahead on horseback to see what the procession was like. They soon caught sight of some coaches with several men on horseback in the front and rear. Some of the riders signaled them to try a horse

race. Thinking that these men were the valets of the governor-general, they were not slow in taking them up. At full speed they arrived at the meeting place. How astonished they were when some of the riders helped the smiling Lord Dufferin to alight from his horse. The young Mennonites had raced the representative of the King right before the eyes of his humble subjects. It was a lesson never to be forgotten to know what it meant to live in a real democratic country.

Special songs by the Gruenfeld school children were sung before the guests and then lunch was served by the girls.

Lord Dufferin held a memorable speech on this occasion. The last phrase, quoted here, indicates the theme of the lengthy address: "If you have come here to find a peaceful place to live in, peace we can promise you."

When Lord Dufferin returned to Winnipeg he spoke to an assembly of provincial and city officials and remarked very favorably on the progress that had been made in the Mennonite settlement:

"Although I have witnessed many sights to cause me pleasure during my various progresses through the Dominion, seldom have I beheld any spectacle more pregnant with prophecy, more fraught with promise of a successful future than the Mennonite

settlement. (Applause.) When I visited these interesting people, they had been only two years in the province, and yet in a long ride I took across many miles of prairie, which but yesterday was absolutely bare, desolate, untenanted, the home of the wolf, the badger and the eagle, I passed village after village, homestead after homestead, furnished with all the conveniences and incidents of European comfort, and of a scientific agriculture: while on either side of the road, cornfields ripe for harvest, and pastures populous with herds of cattle stretched away to the horizon (Great Applause). Even on this continent — the peculiar theatre of rapid change and progress — there has nowhere, I imagine, taken place so marvellous a transformation."

Lord Bessborough visited Steinbach in 1933

The second visit of a governor-general was made by Lord Bessborough Aug. 3, 1933. This time a public reception was held on the old school grounds in Steinbach and although it was in the busy harvest season, a great many people assembled to see the representative



Three anniversaries of the 1874 arrival of the Mennonites in the East Reserve have been observed. The first, the 50th anniversary, was in 1924 at what is today known as Mitchell. This was in a tent and the event was nearly rained out. The second anniversary was marked Aug. 1, 1934 at the old Kornelsen School grounds in Steinbach. (see picture above). Several hundred of the 2,000 people attending were still members of original pioneer families. The 75th anniversary was held July 8, 1949 at the Southwood School, Steinbach and the 100th will be held in 1974.

—photo courtesy Walt's Studio

of the King. He is still remembered, having shaken hands with some of the pioneers who still wore the same style of dress as was the custom on the first visit by Lord Dufferin.

Following this visit, many years went by before anyone of equal or greater status visited the community or area. Then, in early 1970, Manitoba's centennial year, there came word that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth was going to visit the province and rumors after a while spoke of possibilities that the royal visit might be extended to include Steinbach.

Due largely to the efforts of MLA Leonard Barkman (who was also mayor of Steinbach at the time) rumors became reality as Her Royal Highness and Prince Charles both visited Steinbach on Tuesday, July 14.

The *Carillon News*, which preserved the Royal Visit in a special souvenir edition, commented:

"It was the most memorable and exciting moment in the history of the Southeast. For the first time since the earliest European settlers arrived in the 1860's and '70's, a member of the British royal family paid a personal visit to the communities of La Broquerie, Steinbach, Sarto, Grunthal and St. Pierre.

"For these communities and their people the visit by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles on the eve of Manitoba's 100th birthday highlighted a century of economic and cultural development."

The excitement of the Royal visit was carried in the *Carillon's* coverage of the great event:

Officials waited nervously, 10,000 adults and children pushed for better viewing positions and security personnel scanned the crowds with wary eyes. The time was 10:38 a.m. Tuesday. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was about 10 minutes late on the occasion of her first visit ever to Steinbach.

Just as the excitement was mounting to a pitch the motorcycle escorts rumbled into view on Steinbach's Main Street and thousands of heads turned as the long black limousine carrying the Queen and Prince Charles swept along behind and came to a halt in front of the civic building.

Although the visit had its origin in La Broquerie where all four members of the royal

family had spent the night in the Queen's special train — Prince Philip and Princess Anne were whisked by helicopter from the train to Carman to attend a gliding championship the same morning — the visit really began in Steinbach where virtually every resident and thousands of out-of-towner's jammed the streets and receiving area in front of the civic building.

No one was able to accurately estimate the number of people gathered to see the Queen and Prince but several estimates were in the 10,000 range.

The royal entourage began in La Broquerie and travelled along Highway 52 and along Steinbach's Main Street, completely filled with onlookers on both sides beginning on the east end of town. All the street's surrounding the civic building were jammed to capacity with spectators who appeared a little unsure of just how to react. One man was heard to remark: "Should we cheer or should we just stand quietly and watch?"

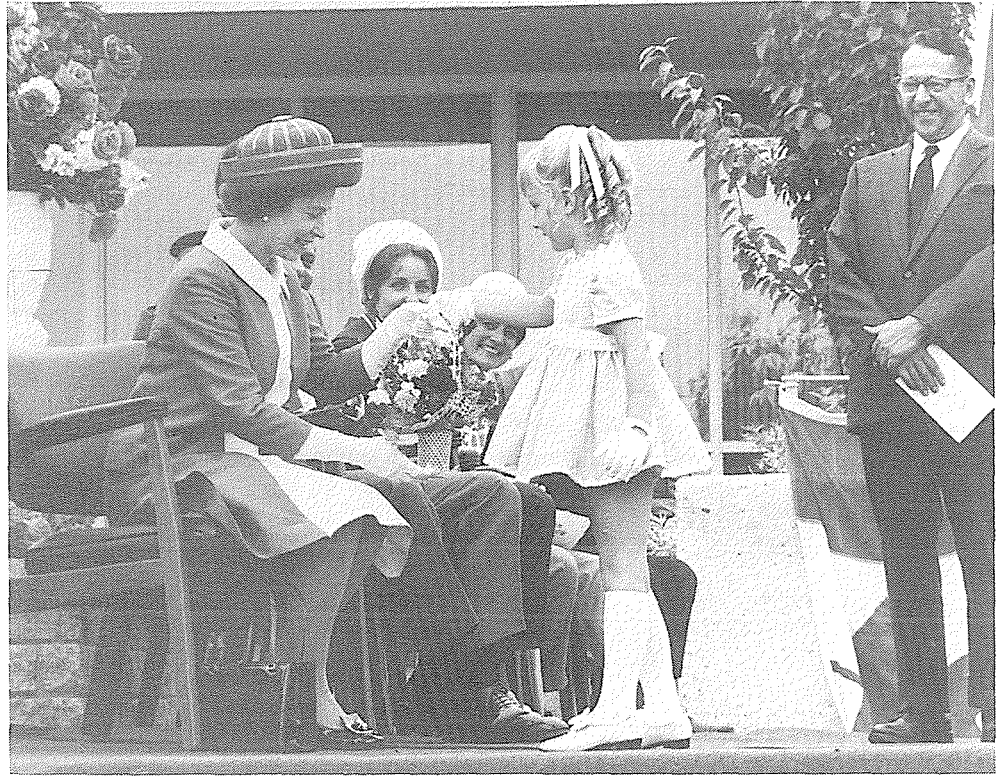
Crowds showed respect

This attitude of awe and respect for the Queen and Prince Charles ran through the entire gathering. On the occasion of Prime Minister Trudeau's visit just two weeks ago, Steinbachers had cheered wildly, yet the Queen's visit was something to be treated differently. Here was royalty!

The same feeling of respect toward the monarchy was also heard in a short speech delivered to the Queen on behalf of Steinbach's religious community. "... We believe in a very special way has the Word of God spoken about relationships of God's people to monarchy and therefore we accept our responsibility towards those whom God has placed on the throne," said Rev. J.D.Reimer.

The visit to Steinbach was short and consisted of a brief welcoming address by Mayor L.A. Barkman, a German hymn by the community choir and presentation of flowers to Her Majesty by four-year-old Lisa Dawn Epp.

To most of the thousands viewing the Queen in Steinbach it was a disappointment not to have heard her speak at all. They had seen the Queen; the whole visit would have been complete had she said only a few words.



Four-and-one-half-year-old Lisa Epp, daughter of Mr and Mrs Jake Epp, presented Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth with a bouquet on her visit to Steinbach July 14. Accompanied by Prince Philip and Prince Charles, this was the first royal visit to Steinbach in the history of the community.

—Carillon News photo

Receives passing welcome

Again, as the royal cavalcade travelled through the smaller communities of Sarto and Grunthal, people put aside whatever they were doing and came to watch. Sarto residents hung a "Welcome to Sarto" banner across the highway and in Grunthal some 2,000 spectators lined the main street to give the Queen and Prince a passing welcome.

The central square in front of the church was the scene of all the action in St. Pierre as a crowd of perhaps 6,000 leaned at constraining ropes to hear Queen Elizabeth deliver a speech in French. The Queen had earlier been greeted by St. Pierre Mayor Fernand Lavergne and Etienne Gaboury, president of the Societe Franco Manitobaine. Prior to her speech, the Queen and Prince also spent several minutes

chatting informally with a citizen's group lined up before the platform.

The crowds in St. Pierre reacted more volubly than those in Steinbach and security personnel at times had difficulty restraining overly enthusiastic spectators.

Prime Minister Trudeau came July 1, 1970

Another highlight for the residents of Steinbach and area occurred July 1, 1971 when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau visited the community and was accorded a tumultuous welcome by some 6,500 people.

Looking flamboyant in a striped, open-buttoned shirt and bandana tied casually about his neck, he did more than please the crowds of adults and children as he shook hands, signed autographs, sent aloft a centen-



An estimated 6,500 people got to see Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau during his visit to Steinbach July 1, 1970. This was the first visit of a prime minister not involved in an upcoming election. Sitting on the prime minister's lap for this appealing photograph are Patricia Penner, left, eight-year-old daughter of Mr and Mrs Gilbert Penner and 10-year-old Karen Enns, daughter of Mr and Mrs Jake M. Enns.

—Carillon News photo

nial balloon and even took two young children on his lap to join in song with songwriter Bobby Gimby and a crowd of balloon-waving elementary school children.

For most of the thousands crowding in to view the Prime Minister, it was their first glimpse of the dashing bachelor who two years previous initiated a wave of Trudeau-mania which swept himself and his Liberal party into power at Ottawa.

The excitement the prime ministerial visit generated arose out of the man himself, a man whose personal charm and magnetism had elevated him to a popularity hitherto unheard of in Canadian prime ministers.

In a short address at times nearly drowned

out by the sounds of flags in a 50-mile-per-hour wind, Mr Trudeau told the people how pleased he was to visit Steinbach, a community he had heard of as being industrious and hard-working.

"Ever since the early Mennonites settled here in Steinbach, this community has been known as having industrious and a hard-working people and I did know there would be a lot going on today," he said in part.

Bright sunshine, breaking a standing rained-out July 1 tradition, shone on the Prime Minister, Premier and Mrs Ed Schreyer, Hon. James Richardson and Provencher MP Mark Smerchanski as they arrived by car from Winnipeg. The atmosphere was one of informality with brief greetings being ex-

tended by the visitors, Steinbach Mayor L. A. Barkman and chamber of commerce president Peter Barkman.

Everything went on schedule, according to organizers, even the centennial balloon launching by Mr. Trudeau, Premier Schreyer and Mayor Barkman who had difficulty holding the five-foot gaily-decorated balloons in the stiff winds.

Hundreds of well-wishers extended handshakes as the Prime Minister made his exit.

Entertainment for the prime minister, premier and other government representatives included choral selections by the Steinbach Treble Teens and a rousing sing-song by a group of youngsters led by "Manitoba's Pied Piper" Bobby Gimby. Thousands cheered as Mr. Trudeau walked from his platform to the singing youngsters, picked up two young charming girls and set them on his lap while joining the group in song.

It was the highlight of his one-hour visit; he was a hit among the people of Steinbach and southeastern Manitoba.

* * *

Aside from the visits of important dignitaries, there were several other occasions when the name of Steinbach was mentioned in conjunction with a national news story and the most notable occurred Dec. 28, 1960 when 12-year-old Lana Nightengale donated one of her kidneys to save the life of her twin sister Johanna.

The dramatic five-hour transplanting operation took place at the Peter Bent Brinham Hospital in Boston and the parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Nightengale, as well as all the residents of Steinbach and many others across Canada eagerly awaited the results.

All turned out well and money from several public service organizations and flowers and telegrams from many friends and neighbors all helped the family pay the costs and endure the strain.

One of the two Nightengale girls, Johanna, made headlines again, in 1967 when as Mrs. Melvin Rempel of Kleefeld, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy becoming the second woman in Canada to become a mother after a kidney transplant.

28. The 1950 flood and the Vita disaster

Though the history of the East Reserve is marked with countless personal tragedies — drownings, fires, sickness — it is probably remarkable that in nearly 100 years since that area of land was given to the Mennonites in 1874 residents have never experienced a major natural disaster other than the three epidemics of 1884, 1900 and 1918.

Though there were countless summer storms in which trees and even barns were sometimes damaged and winter storms which isolated communities and farms for days, major disasters seemed to have passed this area by.

Two disasters did occur close to this municipality however — one in 1950 and the other in 1954 — and in both cases the people in local communities rallied to help the victims. In 1950 there was the great Red River Flood and in 1954 the tornado at Vita.

First a flashback to the spring of 1950 when the Red River, normally a docile stream within

its southern Manitoba banks, turned against the communities through which it flowed and caused damages estimated at \$300 million...

The first signs that the spring of 1950 might precipitate a disastrous flood appeared about the second week of April as residents watched with increasing anxiety the heavy rainfall and rapidly-melting snow.

The April 21, 1950 edition of the **Carillon News** reported huge areas of farmland already flooded by an unusually quick spring thaw. However, no one was concerned about runoff; the rivers had not yet broken up and runoff flooding, farmers said, was normal for many low-lying areas. Local flash floods occurred in many places but did little actual damage.

Ominous flood warnings had already sounded across the Red River Valley but few people believed that a flood of such proportions could arrive so quickly and with so much force.



Farmers with their cattle and horses escape from the flood zone east toward Niverville in 1950.

River breaks out

On April 22 the Red River broke out of its banks at Emerson; from here on the flooding worsened steadily for the next three weeks.

Scattered evacuations had begun at the Roseau Indian Reserve and on farms east of the Red River near Dominion City. People who had stuck it out during the 1948 flood prepared to move to higher ground as flood reports became more foreboding.

Meanwhile, at St. Jean a gang of men blasted the ice on the river to prevent damage to the main bridge spanning the river. On April 21 the river was still 12 feet below the 1948 level but the flood had only begun.

By April 30 Emerson was completely flooded and the waters still kept rising from day to day. Most of this community's residents however, did not evacuate but moved into the top floors of buildings or other high places. The Russell Hotel advertised, "Business as usual" as men stepped out of boats onto the stairs leading to the second floor.

The Red River at Emerson stood at 46.6 feet at the end of the first week in May and heavy rains to the south in the United States kept swelling the river. At Grand Forks, North Dakota, new floods poured in, forcing people who had recently re-occupied their homes out again.

All transportation to Emerson from the north was cut off by now and trains from Winnipeg travelled as far as Dominion City. In the next few days the rail became one of the main evacuation routes as specially-despatched trains carried people their belongings and livestock to safety.

By May 10 more than 1,000 evacuees had been sent to Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Beausejour and Steinbach.

Complete evacuations

May 12 saw the situation extremely critical. Over 300,000 acres of urban and rural land were under water and the largest evacuation in Canadian history was almost completed. The communities of St. Jean, Morris, Silver Plains, Rosenort and Ste. Agathe sat all but empty as the swirling waters rushed on re-

lentlessly, destroying buildings and drowning hundreds of farm animals who just could not be moved in time despite heroic efforts by farmers and volunteers.

"Morris is closing up," Mayor Harry Shewman told reporters May 7. The last 80 men out of this community of 1,200 moved out the same day, leaving only buildings, equipment and the sound of rushing water.

"Morris is by far the most desolate town along the whole valley," one reporter touring the town by boat wrote. "There is no life anywhere and water in any direction as far as the eye can see." Main Street in the community looked like a river in itself; stalled vehicles of all descriptions stood like islands as only the roofs of the cars remained visible. Morris was perhaps hardest hit of all the Red River communities. For over 23 days the town lay covered by five to 10 feet of water.

The following story covering the reception of evacuees to Steinbach appeared in the May 12 edition of the *Carillon News*.

500 flood victims find haven

Over 500 persons from the flood-torn Rosenort-McTavish area have found refuge in Steinbach and district but more are expected from other districts and Winnipeg.

A partial list of names of the evacuees and their present place of abode will be found elsewhere in this newspaper.

The smooth manner in which these persons were housed and transported may be contributed to the willingness of people to help and the "Emergency centre" which sprang up overnight in the district and in the mayor's office on Friday.

As flood conditions increased and more and more territory became inundated the people of Steinbach became restless. They wanted to help but were at a loss as to where to start. Then on Friday things began to hum. Mayor Barkman went to Winnipeg to offer men, trucks and bulldozers. At the same time, two gentlemen from Greenland canvassed Steinbach for boats. An appeal had come from Rosenort for four boats — and this caused some excitement. Three boats and one motor were obtained and rushed to Winnipeg where a special train was waiting. Two men, P. Toews and B. Derksen,

were to take the small craft from the station at McTavish, which was as far as the train could go, to the village of Rosenort. On Friday night the first 45 evacuees from this district arrived in Steinbach."

Mayor Barkman, who was in Winnipeg, made arrangements with the Red Cross and also remained in contact with Steinbach at the C. T. Loewen office. And so, without any formal or informal meetings the "Emergency Centre" was born. On the following (Saturday-Sunday) another 210 evacuees arrived in Winnipeg and were immediately whisked away to Steinbach, Greenland and Kleefeld; Sunday to Monday night another 275 people arrived. All arrangements for transportation and billeting had been made through the centre without a hitch.

In Steinbach, three additional teachers were obtained as children of evacuated flood victims were accommodated in local schools.

By now the provincial government realized they had an emergency on their hands. The Manitoba Flood Relief Fund was born with a \$10 million total set as a flood relief goal. Appeals for funds were sent out as far as England.

Winnipeggers became acutely aware of flooding along the southern portions of the Red River Valley when the ever-rising waters poured into their city and despite the efforts of thousands of volunteers and 3,000 army recruits, large portions of Winnipeg itself had to be evacuated. Again, several hundred were harbored in Steinbach and surrounding areas.

In Winnipeg, various methods of recruiting floodfighting volunteers were tried. At one time, theatres and beer parlors were closed in the hope that those men who usually frequented these places would see the need for help and pitch in.

In late May the flood waters receded and people began returning to their homes to begin a massive clean-up job. Basements had to be pumped out and the mud removed, houses filled with debris had to be cleaned completely and any equipment left in the water had to be dismantled, cleaned, greased and reassembled. Garages in various communities advertised specials on vehicle clean-ups which meant stripping cars, trucks and tractors down completely.

Flood-stricken people turned to the government for assistance while local politicians helped fight for aid, particularly for farmers, many of whom were unable to put in a crop that year.

Premier Doug L. Campbell in mid-June of 1950 made the long-awaited announcement that flood-ravaged victims would be assisted in the form of cash payments of up to \$3,000 for damages on private buildings and small businesses.

Flood fighting agencies wound up their affairs, among them the Steinbach Flood Relief Committee. This story, published in the *Carillon News* edition of July 28, 1950, sums up the financial flood fighting efforts locally.

Aaron Warkentin, secretary treasurer of the Steinbach Flood Relief Committee, reported that affairs of the committee have been wound up and that the organization was now dissolved.

The amount received by the committee in cash totalled \$1,016.48. Of this amount \$565.54 was paid out in food vouchers and the balance of \$450.94 was sent to the central flood relief fund.

Disaster at Vita— June 19, 1955

Though the tornado that hit Vita on June 19, 1955 did not cause the destruction that the 1950 flood did, its toll and unexpected impact shocked the entire province.

Again, help from local areas was quickly forthcoming. Volunteers cleared debris, housewives took up collections of clothing and kitchen utensils. Money was donated.

The *Carillon News* printed a special pictorial booklet describing the tragedy with profits going to the people of Vita. In it, staff writer Sadie Neufeld, described the events of that tragic day:

When disaster struck Vita

The village of Vita centers a placid farming community in Southeastern Manitoba. Geographically it is located on the Morden-Sprague highway, some 75 miles from Winnipeg. It was founded in 1898 by Ukrainian settlers and today has a population of approximately 350 people.

Until that fateful afternoon of June 19, 1955, Vita was little known to the outside world. Its



June 19, 1955. Minutes after the tornado hit Vita. Citizens stood by helpless as flames enveloped one home after another. Victims appeared dazed after the storm, unable to comprehend that such a thing could have happened to them. Six homes were destroyed. Total loss was around one-half million dollars. —Carillon News photo

citizens went contentedly about their daily affairs, contributing, without fanfare, to the gradual evolution of the community's progress.

Spring of 1955 smiled on Vita, on her several stores, cafes, garages, her two churches, her high school and hospital, and her comfortable homes and growing industries.

Vita was a pleasant place in which to live.

Then the tornado struck.

It was Sunday afternoon and a friendly ball game was in progress in the new ball park. Vita was leading Woodmore 11-1 and fans were exultant. A housewife was preparing an early evening meal and her neighbor across the street was entertaining guests.

A father and son were fishing near Vita. The father glanced at his watch, saw that it was nearing 4:30 and decided to head for home, nine miles away. The breeze had begun to whip at the line and the sky had assumed a blue intenseness which certainly boded a shower. There would be little more fishing that day, anyway. But long before the pair reached home the wind had become a lash and the promise of a shower had turned into grim threat as black thunderheads banked and swirled in fury. Rain began to slosh on the windshield and hail clattered on the top.

Suddenly a long waving tentacle dangled

from the sky. It reached, recoiled, and reached again. Those in the village who saw it, recognized its portent and raced for shelter.

It was an explosion. A nightmare of sound and motion. One hundred and twenty seconds of terror. Windows shattered, roofs were wrenched off and sent careening into the street. Walls shivered, and tottered, then collapsed on the people who sought their shelter. Dismembered articles of furniture thrashed about. Chimneys, telephone and hydro poles snapped and reeled drunkenly down the street. Wind slashed and hail battered.

Everything was black. Electricity failed as hydro wires were reduced to mere puppet strings. Black clouds blanketed the sun and flying dust and debris obscured what little light filtered through the clouds. It was midnight at 4:30 in the afternoon.

Then everything was silent. Dazed citizens, battered and bleeding, clambered out of the rubble — only to be faced by a new destructor. Villagers watched in helpless horror as tongues of flame slithered up walls, curled over window sills and shot skyward. Six homes which had been mercifully left standing by the wind, went up in flames.

Victims were dazed and bewildered by the onslaught but somehow the need for immediate action managed to impress itself and citizens

went to work. Rescue crews began to dig through rubble and carry away the injured.

Miraculously, no one was killed but eight persons were severely injured and had to be taken to hospitals in nearby towns. A total of 41 persons were given first aid in the remains of Dr. Waldon's ravaged hospital before it was closed.

As rescue workers combed through piles of debris and rubble the strange story, in its individual chapters, began to unfold.

Seventy-five year old pensioner, Mike Sandul, was hurled bodily from his home, deposited on the street and completely wrapped in broken power lines. His house was scattered debris, unrecognizable.

Nicky Stecky had just been putting the finishing touches on his new bungalow — his dream home. He had spent every available minute of his time, for the past two years, working on it — now, it stood skeletoned, wrecked almost beyond repair.

Edward Wolanski, four and one-half miles southeast of Vita, had lived frugally and worked hard for many years, doing his best to wrest a few comforts from his impoverished plot of soil. Finally, in May of this year he had completed, and paid for, a new barn which he had worked at for two diligent years.

In two minutes the twister wiped out a lifetime of hard work.

Mrs Wolanski and her 10-year-old daughter crouched on the floor when the storm struck. When it passed they found themselves out in the open — every vista of their habitat gone. House, granary, and the new barn had vanished and only the floor of the house remained as evidence that the desolate field in which they stood had once been a farm yard.

Tkachyk's Garage was a shapeless pile of rubble. The crumpled remains of a 1955 model car in the showroom lay folded beneath tons of cement blocks.

Loewen Funeral Home had disappeared and the cement foundation had been swept clean even of dust. A black casket had come to rest in a ditch and a wreath, perfectly intact, hung from a nearby fence post.

The story was similar from one neighbor to the next. The north sector of town looked as though a giant reaper had cut a mile-long swath.

The twister had come in from the southwest, swung in an arc to the north, veered along 1st Avenue, turned south, then swept away from the southeast corner.

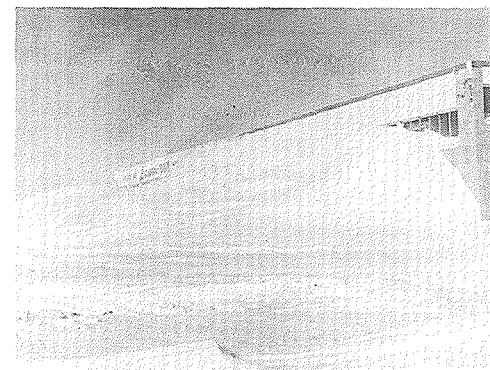
There was ruin everywhere. The 12-bed Memorial Hospital, Vita's pride, stood roofless, its inside wrecked. Doors and windows were ripped out and cots mere twisted steel.

Vita's high school, recently elevated to the status of collegiate institute, resembled a splintered pile of giant kitchen matches. All that remained of the once proud high school was one broken wall, ready to topple.

Probably the hardest hit was the family of the bus driver, Roy Ridley. The Ridley home was tossed into the air, carried a distance of 200 yards, then dropped to the ground. The whole family, Roy, Mrs. Ridley, three-year-old Cynthia and two-year-old Rodney, were dug from the wreckage and taken to hospital.

Others who required hospitalization, aside from the four members of the Ridley family, were Eddie Cesmystruk, aged nine, who suffered multiple injuries and fractures and his 14-year-old sister, Jean, who had a severe arm injury; Mrs Morris Kadyniuk, who was struck by flying glass; Mike Sandul, whose story was related earlier; and tiny six-month-old Maureen Cordette.

At present, stricken Vita is struggling to rehabilitate itself. Many families have lost everything, most homes have been severely crippled. Some will be aided somewhat by insurance, but an estimated \$200,000.00 damage was not covered by insurance of any kind.



Remember the March, 1966 storm? This is what C. T. Loewen's factory looked like the next day.

—Carillon News photo

Reviews *continued...*

"The editor and publishers of the Carillon News have performed a remarkable service for the people of southern Manitoba by publishing this history of the Steinbach area. The book is extremely readable. Among older people it will awaken many memories. For younger people it may be the key to a better understanding of their heritage, hopefully easing the necessary transition to a mature acceptance of one's past."

Dr. Roy Vogt,
Department of Economics,
University of Manitoba,
and editor of the "Mennonite Mirror"

An exciting social history! The author has not fallen into the trap of merely documenting the history of Steinbach and surrounding area. Instead he takes the reader into the past and shows how people lived, what made them what they were! The result is a book filled with local colour, anecdotes, tales of its former residents, and a critical look at Steinbach's present.

Despite the attempt to relate to the past, the author shows a keen insight into the religious beliefs and attitudes of the Mennonite pioneer. This religious belief was the determining factor in the philosophy and acceptance of everyday life. The deep religious convictions and their effects on the development of Steinbach are carefully traced by the author.

Reflections on our heritage will become a cherished possession to present and former residents of Steinbach. To the reader not native to Steinbach, **Reflections on our heritage** will give an insight to the uniqueness of this area of Manitoba.

A. Jake Epp,
history teacher,
Steinbach Collegiate

Reflections on our heritage is a comprehensive source of information pertaining to the larger Steinbach community established nearly 100 years ago by Mennonites coming from the Chortitzer and Molotschna settlements in Russia. The author, Abe Warkentin, editor of the **Carillon News**, has proven to be well informed in relating the total history of this significant community...

Dr. Cornelius Krahn, director,
Mennonite Library and Archives,
Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

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